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Under the NORTHERN LIGHTS

MRS. J. CARLTON WARD

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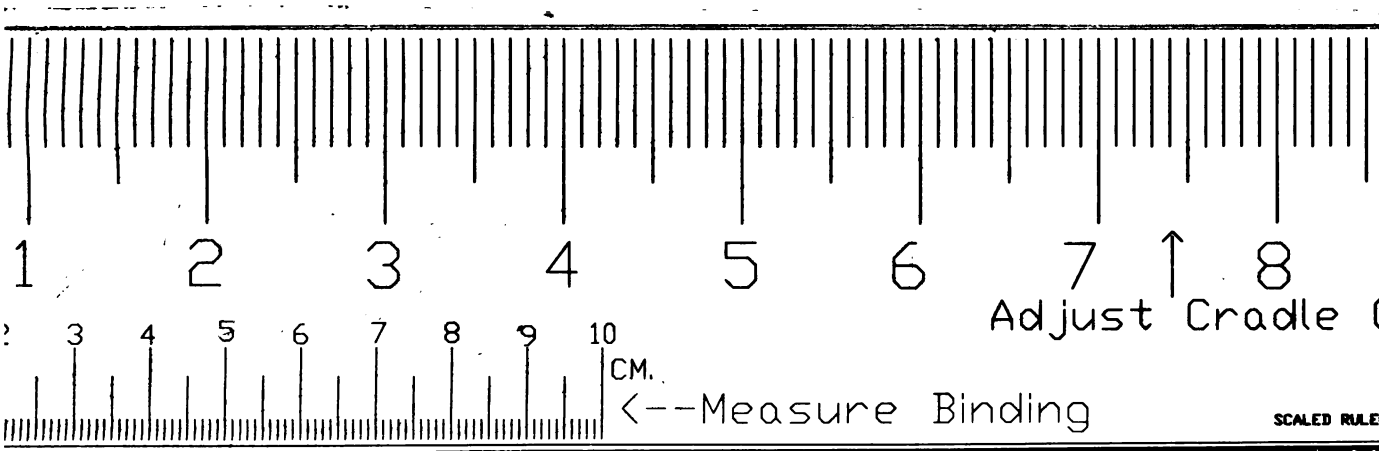
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May I come in?

UNDER THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

By

MRS. J. CARLTON WARD

New York

A. WESSELS

1909

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ILLUSTRATIONS

"May I come in?" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"Stop! You must not!" . . . . *facing page* 196

Churchill bending over Eleanor found her inert and lifeless . . . . . *facing page* 246

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Under the Northern Lights

CHAPTER I

When John Churchill was born, his father, Alexander Churchill, held a prominent position and standing among the merchants of New York. Mr. Churchill was sufficiently affluent to own a modest, attractive home in one of the side streets of the better up-town residential section; and to live in the style becoming a gentleman of means and culture, a member of the best clubs and a substantial citizen of the metropolis.

The progenitors of this branch of the Churchill family had sailed to America in the early years of the seventeenth century and had represented the stalwart worth, refinement, bravery and nobility of manhood and womanhood, which make for aristocracy in the new world. They fought in the Colonial wars, and they labored with hands, heads and hearts in the struggle for independence. Patrician by lineage, but with the spirit of democracy aflame in their breasts, they scorned no

work which might contribute to the upbuilding of this superb commonwealth destined to rank among the foremost of the powers of the earth.

John grew up with the enthusiasm of his ancestors strong within him. Just a little too hot-headed and willful, perhaps, although he learned later that such liberties were apt to react in retribution; then he changed his course.

His disposition was reserved, almost cold, except with intimates, with whom he could be a jolly good fellow, warm-hearted and loyal.

He attended the public school, and after graduating from the high school, entered Cornell. After four years at the University another civil engineer left Ithaca.

His father, however, was not satisfied. The boy must have a Columbia School of Mines diploma.

The transition from Ithaca's rural distractions to the vivid realities of the Great White Way left its impression. His experiences were the usual ones, but he sailed through their deviating channels pretty steadily, so that while his escapades were daring, many of them to a point of recklessness, he emerged with

the curiosity-hunger appeased, and the conviction that he had lived at least.

About that time he met a girl who infatuated him. She was attractive, handsome and clever, besides being capable and possessing a bright intelligence and sparkle. But this charm would at times suddenly change to dull, listless apathy, which greatly puzzled Churchill.

Credit was due her that she was a wage earner and that she proved competent and efficient as a worker. She was private secretary to the Attorney Reginald Wentworth, the father of John's chum, Richard. The conditions of her life appealed to Churchill's sympathies. She helped support her parents, she studied several things as well as books—facts about herself she revealed with commendable hesitation.

His frequent visits to the office of Wentworth and Son rendered it an easy matter for him to see her and know her better each time.

A younger brother would have called John Churchill love-sick names, and an older brother—a veteran, an old campaigner, for instance—might have said the kid had a bad case of calf love. Being deprived of these

advisers and moral props, Jack groped quite helplessly and concluded he was madly in love, of course, but would work if she would wait.

This was all very manly and commendable. However, he was sane enough to be convinced that he would be a simpleton to think of marriage at present. So he wanted to get to work, hard work, the ardor of the Colonial woodsman and Indian fighter asserting itself, no doubt; and with the diploma of Columbia in his pocket, he fretted to speedily get about unearthing all the ore beyond the Rockies.

At this time certain manifestations in business conditions held a sense of impending disaster for Mr. Churchill.

He looked with alarm and anxiety at the growing tendency toward trusts and corporations, which he knew to be warring elements against the already expiring standards. Mr. Churchill saw the threatening indications which prefigured the annihilation of the old order of conducting business, and trembled for his rather obsolete business principles. Never one of the fighting, aggressive Captains of Industry, he dreaded the conflict. His was the simple, peaceful "live-and-let-live" policy,—and the clash of arms and the

smell of gunpowder startled his timorous nature.

A small position, which seemed encouraging as an opening, had been offered to Jack. He was to go to Nevada, in a new mining project about to be developed. He had noticed the agitation which disturbed the business atmosphere of Mr. Churchill's office, for this disturbing element had invaded the serenity of the home—now heavily mortgaged, as he had discovered recently, quite accidentally, while other securities had been jeopardized to meet the demands of putting up a fight against the inevitable. Mr. Churchill's traditions and pride would not admit of diplomacy or compromise, and this meant that sooner or later he must go under,—succumb to the engulfing current and be lost in the devastation.

CHAPTER II

CHURCHILL found many reasons, without hunting for them, for going to the office of Wentworth and Son.

The unfortunate circumstances which compelled such a charming girl to toil appealed to his chivalry and he longed to release her. He fancied her a flower wasting its sweetness.

Richard, the chum, looked upon this little affair with misgiving, and decided that John was making a fool of himself. He knew May Rollins rather well himself. She had estimated his eligibility, and the wily Richard sniffed intrigue.

"I say, Jack, old boy," Dick ventured, as they were sitting late over coffee and cigarettes at the little Café Ambrosia. "You need glasses. There's something the matter with your eyes."

"What the deuce are you driving at?" growled the other.

"Don't jump at conclusions about the private secretary. She's quite a clever girl. She

calculated even I might do to pull her out of the commonplace, but I caught on. You know that chestnut about the wagon and the star? Well, take it from me that she's quite capable of doing the hitching."

Jack sat glum and silent, narrowing his eyes as he pulled hard on his cigarette.

"You think it's none of my business," continued Dick. "Perhaps you're right." Then lowering his voice and looking with steady firmness across the table, he added, "But I'll be damned if I'll see you sacrificed," and his fist came down in emphasis.

Churchill edged away from the table, plunged his hands in his trousers pockets and tilting his chair, rocked back and forth slowly, his face flushing. Dick knew this generally preceded an outburst, especially when accompanied with the narrowing eyes and lips pressed together as if his jaws had snapped shut for all time. But that is just what would mislead, because instantly they would fly open again and the English language—that is, parts of it—would come tumbling out in picturesque vehemence.

This time it was different. Churchill gave his best friend a surprise. He said almost

sweetly, "Thanks, Dick. Don't you think we'd better be off? Everybody's gone; we're the last. Here, waiter, call a hansom. I'll put you down, old man."

Saturday came a few days later, sweltering and torrid, and the office district about noon was deserted.

Churchill, hurrying through luncheon, expected to join Wentworth at the Polo Grounds for an especially great ball game. On his way, he discovered,—by hunting for it,—an item of so-called business which Wentworth and Son should have at once, and he rushed to their office hoping to reach there before it closed for the half holiday.

The door yielded, and opening it, he found Miss Rollins, looking tired and worn, pinning on her hat. She seemed drooping and inert. Her eyes were heavy lidded.

He had noticed these mysterious symptoms before and wondered.

"Have all the others gone?" He came forward smiling, as he removed his hat.

"Yes; I am quite alone. Can I do anything for you?"

"No; no, thank you," looking at her with a steady puzzled gaze, which caused her some

confusion as she fumbled with her veil. "I shall leave this memoranda with you for Mr. Wentworth." He continued to look at her rather hard. "You are not well?"

"Oh, I am just tired and warm," but her eyes were unsteady as though some drug were acting. "I just long for a smell of the sea." But she wasn't quite easy, and Jack saw something was wrong.

He was tremendously sympathetic. She must indeed be exhausted, and would be the better for an outing. He looked at his watch. "It is now one o'clock. Can you be ready to catch the two-thirty for Farview Beach?"

"Yes," rather listlessly, he thought.

"Very well. I shall meet you at the ferry at two-fifteen; at least, I shall be there then. Don't be late." And together they closed the office and took the elevator to the street.

He put her in a car and then hurriedly 'phoned Wentworth not to wait, he would explain later.

"Oh, all right, old chap. Found your flower somewhat wilted, eh? and going to place it in a refreshing atmosphere? Ta ta. So long!"

A smothered, "Oh, go to ——" just reached Dick's ears before the receiver at the other end slammed in place.

"Poor John!" laughed Dick as he shook his head regretfully.

CHAPTER III

A SUDDEN impulse, which was the result of a sub-conscious purpose, long and carefully cherished, flashed through the girl's brain as they sped along, swaying and swinging over Long Island's steel highway. Odoriferous Hunter's Point, with its parched and squalid ash heaps and foul dumping preserves, was passed, and the train emerged into more cleanly and attractive country of thrifty farms. The fields of even rows of vegetables vanished back into perspective as they glided from each side of the rails. Finally the pungent salt, marshy smell and the cooling breezes heralded the approach to the sea.

May's fatigue and exhaustion seemed to leave her as the exhilaration of the salt air swept through her being. She regained her well-poised self and now laughed and chatted with Churchill quite easily. Her charm was undeniable. He felt himself drawn to her in spite of phantom doubts. Dick had hinted things, to which, however, he could not permit

himself to listen. But still, something within him refused to ignore these peculiar attacks of listlessness to which the girl succumbed so suddenly at times.

As she roused herself that afternoon, the impulse to dare a plan which meant the realization of her hopes, took definite shape. She recollected several occasions that she had heard of, when even wary couples had missed the last train returning, and a hasty marriage ceremony at the Beach had saved the young lady's reputation. She knew Jack's chivalrous spirit sufficiently to count on his acceding to her entreaties to save her good name by the only honorable means. It was a daring *coup,* but she felt that she could handle the situation with just the right amount of appealing femininity in distress. And she did. Before the last train that night from Farview Beach had reached Greenpoint, she was Mrs. John Churchill, and the clergyman, who was a guest at the hotel, had pocketed his ten dollars and retired. The bride and groom registered at the more exclusive Imperial Arms.

The following morning a sickening realization of the hopelessness of the event swept its convincing finality to Jack's clearing brain

and jolted his senses rather cruelly over the stubborn insistent facts of the preceding day. This unruly circumstance seemed an obstinate thing which admitted of no argument. His soul reeled at the awakening.

His father and mother! God! How could he meet them? What could he say to them? It was now that his judgment arose in condemnation of his hasty rash act, and he silently tried and condemned himself. He saw his future life wrecked and blighted. He realized that in a moment of impulse he had destroyed his vision of brilliant success. The appalling inevitableness of his act paralyzed his reason.

CHAPTER IV

THE telephone message from Farview entirely satisfied Mr. and Mrs. Churchill. That Jack should have missed the last train caused no dismay, but they regretted he would not be home to eat breakfast with them; and hoping that he had a comfortable room and a good bed, they wished him good-night, his mother punctuating this with a little soft kiss into the transmitter as she rang off.

The morning air was full of sunshine and the sea rose and fell in molten gold, its scintillant crests flashing into chaplets of flame, as with brooding eyes Churchill paced the long stretch of piazza, gazing seaward, a strangely frowning bridegroom. A wild thought came to him; that, perhaps, if he could plunge in and swim and swim and swim on, on, across its breadth, the bonds would fall away and sink. Imagination and nerves make strange cowards of us.

His whirling thoughts grasped at straws, as from decision to indecision they seized upon any plausible loophole of escape.

She was his wife. Wife! How startling a word! His wife! And at that moment, as he turned in his walk, as if to punctuate the half-breathed exclamation, he saw her coming toward him, down the piazza's long aisle of chairs drawn up like soldiers in military precision, with feet all toed on the identical line of position.

Churchill decided, in that one brief moment, upon their course, and drawing her where some chairs in more remote seclusion gave them privacy, gently said, "You will readily understand, I know, that our—our marriage will prove a surprise, if not a shock, to my parents. I am going to ask you that for a few days you maintain silence; that I may prepare them for so sudden a change. My mother has never met you, you know. I propose," he continued with agitation in his voice, for he dreaded wounding her, "to tell them as soon as I return, but to avoid unpleasant gossip, I ask you to continue your usual daily routine at the office, until I can arrange for our future, which, as I see it now, means going to Nevada. I have been offered a position in a new mine where there is opportunity. It is a very small beginning, but a beginning, and just so much

better than nothing. We must live as miners, just ordinary miners, but we are both young and strong, and the experience will be great! I shall be rather glad to cut all this out, and——"

But her face showed disappointment and a sad lack of interest; and with suppressed emotion her voice shaking, she said stiffly, "Don't, —don't go any further. I know all about the charms of a mining camp," and her eyes were cold and her tone bitter,—"I was born in one. I hate the West—the plains with their relentless sunlight, the desert with its stifling alkali, and all its dullness, and monotony, and dreariness,—while New York with its lights, its noise, its life, the hotels, the theaters, stores, and the people—oh!" Her eyes were aflame with excitement and her form vibrated to the intoxicating recital. Churchill experienced an icy chill as though cold water were trickling down his spine. She ventured even more daringly, taking courage at his silence,—"I should think a very easy way out of all this would be to live with your father and mother."

The incongruousness of the suggestion would have made him laugh, had he been under less strain. What amazed his shocked

sensibilities was her utter lack of appreciation of the delicacy of the situation.

"Perhaps, May, we had better get down to first principles. Your suggestion is—to me—an impossible one. My father's house is not mine, and the fact that it has been my home up to yesterday does not make it so now. Everything is changed. I intend to make my own way, and ask no favors. My capital consists of two diplomas and a body of iron,—wealth incalculable, it seems to me. Ever since I was a little chap I have dreamed of starting in the West. Something calls me there, and I know I shall succeed, but now not alone. We must stand together. Come, May, brace up!"

Her face was dark with discontent, as she half turned from him, knowing that his plan, if carried out, meant hopes unrealized. As she sat, silently inspecting the heap of débris that her fallen air castles made, revolt stormed within her. She felt furious at this disappointment, just when realization and success seemed actually attained. She sat drawn up in resentful dignity, and looked as though she feared his scorn yet dared to resist his gentler mood.

Their train was called. They rose and

walked to it without making reference to their absorbing argument, and taking their seats, it started. During the ride no more was said of the matter and Churchill decided to act without further discussion. On reaching New York, he took her to her home, May's manner displaying injured hauteur, and they parted almost silently. He then rushed up-town, his heart beating violently as he put the latch-key in the door, and opening it, entered his father's house.

A maid was coming downstairs hurriedly, with a trace of tears on her face, as he stood for a moment in the cool, darkened hallway, blinded by its dim light, coming suddenly from the glare of the streets.

"What is it, Catherine?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh, Mr. Jack, your mother is very ill. She was taken bad in the night, sir," wailed the maid.

"Mother? Ill?" and he dashed upstairs, the entire flight, in a few leaps. The ominous smell of strange drugs and the still hush of the room as he entered overpowered his senses. He felt dazed at the strangeness of all this unnatural homecoming. His mother ill!

Such an unheard-of thing. He could never remember her sick, even for a day,—the perfection of healthy womanhood, vigorous, alert, brilliant, beautiful!

He saw the nurse moving about, and Doctor McFay, the great specialist for heart trouble, bending over his mother's form, his father standing at the other side of the room with his elbow on the mantelpiece and his head bowed on his hand. He stood transfixed at this incomprehensible sight, the scene sank back into the recesses of his brain and burned themselves there. Silently he reached his father's side, and laid his hand on his shoulder. The elder man raised his head and seeing who it was, let it fall back again in helpless woe and dejected resignation, saying forlornly: "Oh, my son! God help us!"

"What is the matter with her, father?"

"She is very, very desperately ill. But we must not talk in here." And he made his way into the adjoining chamber through the dressing-room between, motioning for the boy to follow. Jack could not leave that still, silent form without a look, and going over to the bed he stood transfixed with absorbed attention and commiseration. The doctor and nurse

were working over her and the former looked up with a nod of recognition.

The sweet, beautiful face on the pillow showed traces of intense suffering, although now spent and wan. Jack's heart sank in sickening dread and foreboding and something crashed in his head. Dazed, he followed his father into the sitting-room. Apprehension and fear made a coward of him. He shrank from hearing the details.

Now that Jack saw his father in the lightened room, the change in his face, caused by a few hours' suffering, was an additional shock. He looked old and drawn, but he was calm as he said, "Your mother was taken suddenly ill about one o'clock this morning. She retired after you telephoned, as well and bright as always. She awakened about half-past twelve suffering terribly. I got Doctor Howard here in less than twenty minutes' time, and he worked for an hour; then he called up McFay, and he has not left her since he came. He says 'Ptomaine poisoning, and now the heart' —but I cannot think what she could have eaten to cause that. She has not been conscious since two o'clock, and the last word she uttered was 'Jack.' Since then she has lain as you see

her. Doctor McFay says her heart is greatly weakened by the severity of the attack. I telephoned for you about three this morning, but the night clerk at the Farview Hotel said there was no such person registered there."

"No," said Jack chokingly, "I changed my mind and went to the Imperial Arms."

Everything rushed back with crushing force, and his rashness of the preceding day seemed ghastly and horrible!

Mr. Churchill sat, still and helpless, with resigned patience. He half leaned back in a rocking-chair, his hands working nervously together. As he rocked back and forth in quick little jerks he turned his head often toward the door leading into the sickroom, expectantly watching for some favorable signal from the great man, whose every word and glance seemed his only tangible support. Doctor McFay presently entered, and going over to the mantelpiece, stood with his back toward it and his hands behind him, looking grave and serious. He had known Mr. and Mrs. Churchill many years in warm friendship, and their trouble now was his. Mrs. Churchill had won the love and esteem of all who were fortunate enough to know her well,

and he saw that the break in the lives of these two men would be more devastating as the bond was proportionately close.

Mr. Churchill turned his appealing eyes in mute questioning to those of the physician, and each held the other silently for a space. Then Doctor McFay came quietly over, saying, "She is very weak, and the heart is in a most critical, precarious condition."

"But, Doctor, mother is so strong," pleaded Jack in supplicating tones as if to argue the inconsistency of associating her with death. The great man slowly nodded his head in agreement.

"Surely. Hers has been the perfect physique; absolutely so; but this attack has proved a severe blow upon a vital organ; so severe that in such cases the heart usually succumbs. It may not prove so in this case, and we are working to avert it."

Mr. Churchill and Jack felt they could rely upon the smallest ray of hope if he could but give it, knowing he was a man who did not embellish his diagnosis.

The hours dragged on, trailing their moments of agonizing waiting and watching. The three faithful men and two devoted nurses

tirelessly, sentinel-like, kept guard over that frail spark of life with loving watchfulness. She lingered, painlessly passive and serenely still, until a little past midnight, and then near the hour when old men die and babes are born, her spirit passed out, into that vast Beyond, without a backward glance or whispered word.

Her going left them stunned and dazed. Its suddenness and the short illness made it seem glaringly unreal, and to them irreconcilable. They could not accommodate themselves to the void and loss of her presence. The house in its quiet hush seemed already her tomb. The streets were garish and tawdry, and everything looked fantastically superficial.

CHAPTER V

THE state of being, or not being, called death, is to many such an uncertainty that they prefer tangible, positive, material things, even though these entail suffering at times unbearable. The mortal dreads the vague unreality of the world he does not know.

But to Mr. Churchill, who spent the days immediately following the funeral in just sitting quietly waiting his call, death, or what is called death, but what in truth is life, held for him no dread in its silent mysterious force. To join her was the call of his soul to its mate.

He went to the dining-room when meals were announced, but he did not eat. He rose at the usual hour each day, and retired at the usual hour each night, as though the human part of him had already gone and only the mere machine, not quite yet run down, remained. There was no outcry of grief. All this drove Jack to a frenzy. His passionate nature warred. He felt he must act—do something. To sit down with folded hands and just stare at the rug was infuriating.

Presently his mind reverted to the ghastly act of his folly the night preceding his mother's illness and death, and he inwardly gave thanks that she had been spared the knowledge of it. May was showing a restless mood. She had reluctantly agreed to accept the imposed conditions during those sorrowful days, —but now that life was resuming the ordinary routine, and had settled back to the readjusted arrangement, she could see no further reason for continuing to efface herself. As Mrs. John Churchill her place was now more than ever in this home; and to be even more exact, her place now, she urged, was at the head of it.

Her intuition enabled her to see she had blundered somewhat in trying to insist. Jack's was not the nature to be driven, or intimidated; but, with loving handling, as his mother wisely knew, his sympathetic, affectionate heart had yielded always. Her womanly cunning divined that a politic plan would be the wiser and operate more to her interests. She feigned illness, and in plaintive tones and submissive manner appealed to his sympathies. Torn by his sorrow and sense of duty to her who was now dependent upon him, her appeal won.

She came to his home. The servants were amazed, but their training permitted no evidence of their surprise to be discernible. His father appeared not to comprehend; or merely to listen to the explanation with a preoccupied air, as to a matter of little importance. When John, in choking tones, told him that he was married, and his wife asked to be taken into their home, a look of blank wonder and incredible questioning came into the eyes of the elder man; with helpless resignation, as though the problem were too difficult to solve, or did not matter, he gave it up wholly. Jack marveled that his father asked no questions, or seemed in no wise concerned. His apathetic state would have alarmed a more experienced watcher.

Time dragged until a month had passed. The business tangle was becoming apparent in a most emphatic manner, and embarrassment caused by a lack of funds made Jack's heart sink with apprehension. He pored over accounts. Everything of value, all negotiable securities were hopelessly involved. Bankruptcy, like a mighty, pitiless inundation, swept all before it, engulfing the financial structure whose unquestioned reputation for

stability had continued through many years of honorable growth. Mr. Churchill's apparent lack of interest, now became agitated anxiety, and he insisted upon going to the office. But a losing game had been played to the finish—and he had lost!

The conviction proved too crushing and the already tottering spirit broke. A clot of blood settled on the brain, and as he sank into oblivion to the world and his surroundings, life became merely pulse-beats and respiration. Doctor McFay again stood in quiet patience, and looking down upon the stricken man, waited, with the tolerance accorded to the inevitable. "It is merely a matter of time,—very short time possibly,—a few days or probably but a few hours." John's brain reeled; father and mother both snatched from his sight and consciousness in a few short weeks. Bankruptcy and ruin striding gaunt and grim through the home and the market-place!

The agonizing knowledge that there lurked some strange mystery about his wife tortured his reeling senses. That she should at unexpected times appear drugged or partly insensible, first startled, then horrified him. The

day of this positive conviction came after an harassing cataclysm in the business world, where he had seen his father's old-time, solid business become a mass of crumbling financial débris. He went to his wife's room, to tell her of the condition of things and the situation confronting them, and found her with a strange stillness upon her, lying on the couch. Fearing to awaken her from a sleep, he was about closing the door to go down to his father's apartments when she called his name. He came to her side and bending over her, noticed an unnatural expression in her eyes, always beautiful and lustrous. She partly raised herself and he put his arms about her and assisted her to her feet, but she tottered and fell back suddenly, all in a heap.

A choking fear swept through him, and a sickening conviction clamored for acknowledgment. She was under the influence of some drug,—of that he was positive. "May, what is the matter with you? Are you ill? What makes you behave in this way?"

"S'nothing, Jack,—jus' tired,"—and she swayed as she sat on the couch.

"May, there is something else,—you know it. Tell me; what have you been taking?"

"Taking? What d'you mean? I never take things," and she made an effort at dignity.

He saw it was futile to question her further. He must wait until this strange condition should pass and she be mistress of herself again. He moved about the room in despairing aimlessness, picking up this and that ornament or toilet article on the dressing-table, and putting it back again unconsciously. His mind was in a turmoil of suspicion.

Dick's warning again flashed through his mind, and he groaned inwardly at the knowledge which could no longer be denied. His eyes suddenly settled upon a bottle on his wife's dressing-table, and picking it up, he read with blazing eyes,—"Cocaine!" The vial was empty. He turned and left the room. May had already collapsed into a heap, huddled back on the couch, and was feebly mumbling his name as he strode out. He could not have heard had she shouted; in the chaotic horror of his mind he was deaf to all things, and to get off somewhere alone was his most urgent need.

As he passed his father's room, the nurse coming out at that moment reminded him of

the relentless tragedy within. Fate certainly meant there should be no doubt in his mind as to the annihilating resources at her command. He found himself wondering that his own life and robust health should be spared. He smiled mockingly that this had been overlooked.

He went to the library and sat down to think. His mind was working under great excitement, and it worked quickly. In that hour the boy in him died forever, and in the resurrection was revealed the man benumbed, insensible to emotion, apathetic, cold. He rose, rang for Briggs, and gave orders that the doctor when he came should be shown to the library before going upstairs.

It was there he was awaiting him when, in a short time, Doctor McFay was announced.

"Come in, Doctor; I should like a few moments' conversation before you go up to Father. I am going to astonish you very much by telling you that I am married. The ceremony took place the night before Mother's death. For sufficient reasons I have chosen that this marriage must remain absolutely secret. But you are an exception, and I wish you to know of it, and to assist me all you can.

I have discovered that my wife is a cocaine victim, and I am going to place her in a sanitarium. There is some such place for that—that disease, is there not? Another little surprise," he added, his lips curling, although his eyes were too hard for a smile, "Father is a bankrupt—the business is in ruins."

Doctor McFay listened gravely, astonished by this crude, bold enumeration of appalling facts. He failed to recognize in this grim, dark, hard-voiced man the dashing, reckless, headstrong Jack.

"My dear boy, your father is already dead to the world. It can be but a few hours longer that the mere bodily vitality can last. His soul, his mind, have already passed over, and there is now only that something called life left. He will have joined your mother by nightfall."

"Then I have everything arranged, and as soon as that is over, I wind up things here and go."

The kindly face peered into Jack's, incredulous to believe his own ears, and the boy's strangely heartless tones.

"Have you ceased to feel, lad?" he inquired with sympathy.

"Yes," rejoined the other as his eyes gave their steady, defiant answer.

The doctor took several paces with head bowed in thought, determined to offer no advice to such a mood, but to let time mend the awful rent; and, turning, he asked, "Where is your wife? May I see her?"

"Yes,—come,"—and John led the way to their apartments.

At the door of her bedroom John turned and left the doctor. He could not bring himself to enter. He had been tricked, cheated, into a marriage that was sordid and degrading. He returned to the library to await the doctor's investigation, and as he paced the room he determined to see Dick Wentworth at once. In a few moments the doctor came in and the arrangements were talked over and definitely settled.

"Your wife is hopeless. I think she inherits this tendency, and has always been addicted to some drug. I doubt if the habit can ever be broken. A gradual deterioration will follow, with probably softening of the brain resulting. She will live many years, I may confidently say, for she has a most perfect physique,—and she is very handsome." This

last seemed a whisper to himself. Here a knock at the door interrupted them, and Briggs entered to say "the nurse requests that Doctor McFay come immegiate."

He hurried up, and in a few moments Briggs hastily reappeared and summoned Jack to come at once. "Mr. Churchill is dying,"—this in a choking voice, for Briggs had lived in this household since Jack was a boy. Jack again dashed up, as on that other occasion, not so long past,—that other day with all its kaleidoscopic changes which now flashed in those few seconds before his eyes. He was again by the bedside of a dying parent. With his hand clasping that of his father he stood statuelike for several moments, the doctor and nurse waiting, in respectful solicitude. A peaceful sigh followed and the vanishing life had departed.

After Mr. Churchill's body had been laid beside that of his wife, Jack rushed through the closing details, that the agony might not be prolonged. With Wentworth and Son were placed the meager funds resultant from the sale of pictures and all household effects, together with the shreds and remnants of the estate, and a not very generous life insurance

policy. Altogether the amount was only sufficient for all possible expenses for his wife's maintenance at the asylum. Doctor McFay had succeeded in placing her very comfortably, and Jack's emphatic instructions were that she must have every requisite for her physical welfare and moral improvement.

When these arrangements had been completed, he bade farewell to the three stanch, trusted friends, urging them to maintain absolute secrecy in regard to his marriage, and forget his existence, adding that he would never return unless he were successful. The remittances which he would forward from time to time, as he earned the money, would be sent through a Western bank, and, of course, they were to be used in whatever manner his wife's necessities demanded.

CHAPTER VI

"Did you say, Richard, you had heard from John Churchill?"

Mr. Wentworth and his son were seated in the library of their home, after dinner, on a November evening eight years after Churchill's departure from New York.

"Yes; I received this letter yesterday," holding up an envelope, "and he gave me a mild dose of dynamite."

Then he read aloud,

"Goldacres, Nevada,
"November 8, 19—.

"Dear Dick:

"You are still doing business at the same old stand, I find. You see, I read the papers. At first—(after I had decided to reveal myself)—I thought of telephoning you, but I had too much consideration for your nerves. A man may have died, and be very dead in eight years, and I wanted to let you down easy on the resurrection.

"I have swung around the circle in that time, and tried many things in turn,—war, pestilence, and famine; even murder and sudden death had a way of getting next occasionally. Hunger and thrist pall on a fellow

after a bit, and there are mines and mines. Mine were just plain mines, no gold. The Spanish-American unpleasantness coming on about that time, I joined and sauntered up San Juan Hill with the R. R.'s and Teddy, long may he wave!

"The Philippines are really most interesting geographically and commercially, but as sporty summer resorts—not yet but soon—possibly after a bunch or more of the natives are removed or compelled to wear clothes. Killing savages is not my long suit, and the bridge-building season being both short and dull, I grew sleepy and served out.

"The call of the mines pulled me back to Nevada again, and at Goldacres I got on the job. The Haggenheims wanted me to engineer for them, but I told them I was working the other side of the street myself. Later I went to Alaska for them, installed their plants, and did a little turn on my own account. It is a great country, Alaska, and some day I shall return. It is the coming field.

"Accept my congratulations. The papers say you are a leader in cotillons! And you dance well, I understand, and Newport needs you. Good! Let the noble work go on, but for a couple of weeks break away, name a dancing substitute, and come and dance to my music. I can put you up, give you a bundle of straw to sleep on, and a few other little comforts.

"Newcomb has charge of my affairs East. Go and see him. He will put you wise. It is unnecessary for me to urge the advisability of maintaining silence in regard to poor May and her condition. She is hope-

lessly incurable, and knows no one. I never go East if I can avoid doing so.

"How is Uncle Reggy? Give him howdy. So long,

"JACK.

"Let me know your train and you will find my car sidetracked at Chicago. J."

He folded the letter, looked across the library table at his father, laughing, and said, "Great, isn't it? Reads like fiction, don't it? By Jove, I'll start as soon as I can make it. It seems as though he had come back from the dead,—been exhumed, unearthed, dug up, by Jove! Eight years!"

After a pause of several minutes, in which both men sat thinking, the son exclaimed:

"I have it! Jack is Rayner's man for Alaska, and I'll bring them together. Mr. Rayner's plans are matured, and everything hinges now upon the right man for the work, who will go to Skagway at once, and begin operations. Sheridan is not big enough for such a project, but it will be about Jack's size, I think. Mr. Rayner expects to make the trip in June and find things in condition and working order."

"A very good combination, I should say, if it can be managed. If John is as headstrong

as he was when a boy, though, you will have to get busy." As he said this Mr. Wentworth chuckled reminiscently. After a few moments' pause he continued, "Poor John, what a mess he made of his young life by marrying that girl,—to be carrying such a ghastly burden all these years, and still be a young man, is positively tragic!"

He rose, and going to a cabinet, took from it a miniature in a velvet case, and touching a spring, opened it, revealing the exquisite portrait of a very beautiful young girl. He walked over to his son's chair, and in silence held the pictured face down on a level with his eyes. After an admiring scrutiny, the younger man said, "She's certainly a looker, Dad. Who is she?"

"That's John's mother at sixteen. I was madly in love with her, but Alexander won out. John is like her, and I have a very soft spot in my heart for the lad. Go to him, Dick. I should like to see him, myself. When shall you start?"

"As soon as I can."

"Don't mention the eligibility of John to Mr. Rayner until you have consulted the eligible one." They laughed at this, and then he

continued, "I don't understand Rayner. Do you suppose, Dick, he favors his daughter's marriage with Lord Rosthwaite? He is so sensible and loyal an American, and one whom I have always supposed would look upon the international marriage of money to title with such disfavor, if not contempt, that a contract of that description in his immediate household seems inconsistent. It would only add another to the list of great heiresses taking huge fortunes abroad to place them at the disposal of dissolute noblemen. Is she in love with Lord Rosthwaite, or just buying a title?"

"Mrs. Loring doubts if her cousin is in love with anyone, or ever was, and says the girl is satiated with adoration and admirers; but I don't believe that, because I don't suppose that any real live woman with good red blood in her veins ever could get too much admiration, and Eleanor Rayner belongs to that class. I feel confident she has yet to meet *the man.* If she marries Lord Rosthwaite, it will be to please her father, for the two men are warm personal friends, and she adores her father. As for the Englishman, he does not belong to the dissolute nobility. He is a man and a gen-

tleman. Having vast wealth of his own, Miss Rayner's dot would cut no figure."

"Shall Rayner take her with him to Alaska?"

"Yes, and Kenneth Livingston, too,—Mrs. Loring's brother, whom she intends shall take the Mining-Engineering course when he goes to college. She considers this Alaskan trip a practical introduction and a fine opportunity for the boy to see the Aurora Borealis and Polar Star mines."

"It is surprising that Mrs. Loring should not be going——"

"She has other plans, I believe."

For several moments neither spoke. Mr. Wentworth saw his son's face assume a graver look, and he regretted there should be so hopeless a reason for it.

Mrs. Consuelo Loring had very decided views on re-marriage after divorce. In fact, she had decided views on many things, but the fact of Cecil Loring being yet in the flesh was sufficient reason why she should remain released only by the divorce decree, not free to marry again.

Richard had growled and said the decision was narrow and out of date, and that everyone

knew Cecil Loring's dastardly character and unworthiness, and that by his own acts she was as free as though he had never existed.

His father realized that here were two strong natures. His son's decision never to give her up was quite as determined as her refusal to consider his offer of marriage while her divorced husband continued to live.

"She is a remarkable woman," resumed the elder man. "A financial freak. The magnitude of her operations makes even her uncle sit up and take notice, and he never knows what she intends to do next. She is more than half likely to have already gone into mining schemes in Alaska far larger than Rayner's. Why, do you suppose, has she moved her Lares and Penates from New York to Seattle and taken up her residence there in the palatial house she has built on Queen Anne Hill? Not alone to watch the moonlight pour its silver flood over Puget Sound and Mount Rainier. Have you forgotten that Seattle is the gateway to Alaska? The amazing interest she displays in Seattle real estate covers something more startling."

"Oh, that may be, but all this Napoleonic financial exhibition she is giving us, while spec-

tacular, is transient. She is a 'New Thought' disciple and prescribes for herself finance medicinally as a counter-irritant for her marital troubles. Confound the women! Why must they go prancing off on all kinds of absurd hobbies—Suffrage, Christian Science, New Thought, Race Suicide—everything but living the domestic life as originally intended!"

His tone was bitter and impatient.

Two weeks later, Richard Wentworth congratulated himself, as he sped back over prairies and wheat-fields, that his diplomatic negotiations had been satisfactory.

As Churchill's car was uncoupled from the Transcontinental Limited and rolled onto the siding, Wentworth saw a very much sobered and steadied Jack on the platform.

They wrung each other's hands, and their eyes said many things as they stood for a moment in silence, neither one risking a shaky, husky voice.

Wentworth cleared his throat and made the first plunge.

"Lord, but you're black!"

"Yes, a fellow gets that way, out here."

They got in Churchill's machine and rode off to his shack, a dismal wooden shanty without paint which gave it a washed-out transparent complexion like that of a faded old woman.

They sat half the night talking, telling the tale of eight years.

The next morning Wentworth looked out over the hopeless desert, ejaculating, "Why in God's name do you live in such a hole?"

"I'm lost here, and can remain so. I can be equally so in Alaska, and shall like this Rayner project, and am glad to be associated with him."

"Why don't you come back with me and meet him?"

"No. I have been East but once, and that was to place May in the home I had built for her in the Bronx. She did not know me; mind entirely gone, but general health perfect. She has every comfort now—doctors, nurses, servants and a motor car. My retribution tax, old man."

Churchill had found Wentworth's plan worth considering.

Goldacres was quiet now after the whirling excitement of the first inrushing prospectors,

and the madness had become sanity. He could go to Alaska—in fact, would be glad to. He had given the Haggenheims a stiff race in Goldacres and won; and now owned and controlled most of the stock of Pollywog and Jumping Jack.

Mr. Rayner's scheme he particularly liked because it meant developing raw material; and the finished product would be the result of his own brain and work. So the transaction was closed in one brief message, and Churchill started for Alaska by the last of November.

He worked through the exposure and hardships of the frigid winter so admirably that by spring the plant was reared and ready for its working forces.

Mr. Rayner felt confidence in any contract that Wentworth & Son drew up, and all detail was left in this case to their decision. Reports from the Territory were so satisfactory as the months rolled by that by the coming of June the Aurora Borealis and Polar Star stocks were listed.

Churchill began to look expectantly with feelings of mingled curiosity and pleasure to meeting a man so vividly recognized in financial zones, in all matters of promotion and de-

velopment, and was prepared to give Mr. Rayner the sort of welcome he felt would be satisfactory from a business viewpoint.

Eleanor had come to town for the final week, and a few evenings before the start she and her father sat at dinner discussing the completed arrangements.

The evening breeze blew refreshingly from the River, and the Drive winding and curving along the city's western waterline, challenged the whole world to show a nobler highway. Such a park was an unusual and unique possession for a metropolis, with its trees and trimmed lawns, and its paths which climbing up would suddenly veer and drop down the bluff in flights of stone steps nearly to the water's edge. And the massive rocks, rearing their hoary scarred faces as they pushed their bulk through all this civilized cultivation, compelled recognition and reverence. Their seared and lined surfaces proclaimed their antiquity to be the greatest of the upheaved crust of the planet.

From their dining-room Mr. Rayner and Eleanor could see the western sun coloring the waters of the Hudson blood red before it dropped behind the opposite palisade.

"Shall you be ready to leave Thursday?" he asked.

"To-night after the demi-tasse, if you say so."

"That sounds like enthusiasm. You are glad to go?"

"If you wish to live peacefully the remainder of your life, Daddie, don't leave me behind."

"When a girl is educated abroad and expects to marry an English nobleman, she——" She looked up at him with very direct searching eyes.

"Have I said I was going to marry an English nobleman. That detail seems a necessary preliminary, don't you think?"

"You owe it to society to marry."

"Oh, boo for society! I owe it to you not to—that is, unless——"

"Yes, unless——" he repeated smiling, surmising her drift.

"Unless you marry also, Daddie," she answered mournfully.

"That's all very nice and self-sacrificing of you, my child, but I'll wager when the truly Knight rides into the lists your eyes will answer his gaze, and realize some divine spark

has been struck somewhere in the universe, and has flashed its message through your being. Then your poor old father will be but a dim recollection to you."

"Nonsense; you must admit that I certainly have been tested, and have proved there is no 'truly Knight' for me."

"Don't be too sure; he is lurking somewhere; and has merely been detained."

"Then this tardy laggard will presently find me an old maid, if he loiters on the way much longer, and he had better hurry if he would avert the calamity. I'm twenty-one; do you realize that, Daddie?"

"This, then, might be the opportune moment for considering Lord Rosthwaite's offer."

Her face drew into serious lines as she asked: "But, Dad, do you really *wish* me to marry him?"

"My dear child, don't put it quite that way; you are absolutely free in such a matter, but you know that I esteem Rosthwaite highly."

He was silent, looking at the table-cloth quite absorbed, as he traced with an unused fork, the pattern of the damask.

She cheerfully interrupted—"Let us pi-

geon-hole him for the present, anyway. 'Sufficient unto the day.' Tell me about Alaska."

"I have rented Con's yacht, the *Silvermere,* and she has chartered a huge affair, the *Yukon,* from some newly rich out there, for her Japan trip. She feared the *Silvermere* was hardly enough of a 'liner' to cross the Pacific. She is deep in Seattle real estate. She begins by digging hills from the heart of the city, dropping them into Puget Sound for dock property and building warehouses on top and so controlling a substantial waterfront. Seattle has many miles of this sort of dockage, due to this filling-in process."

"She's a wonder."

"She certainly is," he added with a certain resignation.

"It would not surprise me in the least to hear she had built an Italian villa inside the Arctic Circle and was growing bananas and dates there."

They laughed. Then he resumed.

"She wishes us to spend a week with her. She wants to show us the social life as well as the geographical wonders of the Northwest. She also wants us to see her rustic bungalows for renting on Lake Washington. They are

furnished in bamboo, have Japanese tea sets, and as an especial attraction, have the latest Paquin gowns hanging in the closets! But I shall cut the Seattle visit to a few days, as I am axious to get North at once."

CHAPTER VII

THE North Coast Limited was late getting into Seattle.

As it rolled into the Union Station, Mrs. Loring and Kenneth stood waiting the other side of the gates through which the crowd coming from the train would pass on its way to the street.

"Hi, there, El," said Kenneth, as he pushed his way through and grabbed his cousin, giving her a vociferous greeting, rather annihilating in its heartiness.

"Oh, thanks, Ken dear, I am overjoyed to see you, but spare the lace on my waist and the net on my hair, both of which I assure you are most perishable."

"I smashed your Marcel, did I? Oh, well, forget it."

Turning to his uncle, he blurted out in boyish heartiness, "It's just dippy of you to ask me for Alaska, Uncle Jim; that's the best ever. Gee!"

They managed to push their way to Mrs.

Loring where she had been held back by the current, and had quite given up the struggle.

"You look as fresh! You are not travel-stained even, either of you. I don't believe you are so much as tired."

"We're not. I could go and do it all over again. I had heard so much about the unendurable ride over the desert with its choking alkali, that I fully expected strangulation. We came through with less inconvenience and train-soil than one gets in the Subway," protested the girl.

"That is all very true, my dear, when one comes through in one's private car," laughed Mrs. Loring; "but to know actual conditions, try a berth in a tourist car in sizzling July heat when closed windows mean suffocation and open windows mean instant death."

"You will find Eleanor quite mad, Consuelo. She has refused food and sleep, fearing some State might slip by before she actually stood upon its soil. She made a point of leaving the car at every station. She has all the valises and traveling cases stuffed with sticks and stones and beads and baskets that

the Indians and cowboys at the stations gladly exchanged for her purse."

"If intense interest in this wonderland means lunacy," replied Eleanor, "I am surely a bad case. Laugh all you please, everybody. I am a real American for the first time. I intend to absorb every bit of this marvelous scenery and let it soak through and through. You should have turned me loose on a ranch with a governess, Daddie, when I was a kid. It was a mistake sending me to school in Europe. Why do people crowd off, year after year, across the Atlantic when they have never been farther West than Jersey City?"

They had reached the street and entered Mrs. Loring's car.

"I tell you what, El," put in Kenneth, "it's all the style now to be tattooed; why don't you have Pompey's Pillar and the Bad Lands tattooed on your—on your——"

"Thanks, Ken, that will do," corrected his sister.

For a distance of a few blocks up to Second Avenue each street, running parallel with the shore, was a steep, sharp climb from the level of the water, so that in most places the upper stories of the buildings were even with the

main floors of those on the next street higher up.

Seattle, like Rome, is a city of hills, but the elevations in the former are much higher and more sharply defined; and to ride in the trolley cars on many of the streets, particularly those running out to Lake Washington, one is reminded of the tramway up the Rigi.

As they turned into Second Avenue, the congestion of traffic was as dense as on Broadway and Forty-second street.

"Is there a convention or an election going on? Such crowds!" asked Eleanor dismayed.

"Oh, it's always like this. That is the Alaska Building over there, Uncle Jim."

"As a sky-scraper it can hold its own," Mr. Rayner returned, eying it admiringly.

"But, Con, honestly, do you ever get homesick for Manhattan?" asked Eleanor.

"N-no, not exactly, but—well, I suppose being a New Yorker is something like being a loyal Englishman. If you're born one you'll die one, no matter how many other places you may live in."

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Eleanor. "Isn't that droll?" and she read from a huge sign plastering the façade of a department store—

"'Great Reduction!
Slaughter Sales!
Prices down to a whisper!'"

A little farther on they came into Pioneer Square with its Totem Pole, standing conspicuously in the center, sixty feet high, carved from a single cedar tree by a tribe of Indians on Tongass Island, Alaska.

"You will enjoy the people here. They seem to be electrified with enthusiasm and prosperity. They don't talk the price of their clothes, and servants and sicknesses. And even the newly-rich are far nicer than ours at home. And the women! They have no time for Pet Dog Clubs. They are engaged in working out big schemes and problems. Some of them conduct lumber camps and run sawmills. Others work farms and irrigating plants."

"It is plain to be seen bridge is not yet," laughed the girl.

"Oh, yes it is. But they don't play *all* of the time. See, there is the New Washington Hotel. Uncle Jim, you will notice some changes since you were here."

Mr. Rayner leaned forward to get a good view all the way up its height.

"It is not so picturesque as the older house though, which rose straight up on top of a high hill from the middle of the street. I remember I liked being hauled up the perpendicular car track to the porte-cochère. It always made me think of Jack and the Bean Stalk."

"It has been torn down and the hill dug away and thrown into the Sound for filling in."

"That seems too bad, for it was such a splendid observatory. I recollect the view from the piazzas gave a wonderful sweep over mountains, lakes and Sound."

Spectacular Seattle! The city of hills and lakes, with far-reaching views of two mountain ranges, snow covered, the Olympics to the west, the Cascades to the east, Mount Rainier in its white robes to the southeast, and three lakes within the city's limits!

Mrs. Loring gave the order to the chauffeur to turn toward Lake Washington.

. . . . .

"Scenery is on such a huge scale here! Fancy a lake twenty-five miles long and five wide in the heart of New York. There are my bungalows, Eleanor."

They stopped the car and got out. Eleanor was fascinated.

"You may have me for a tenant, Con," she exclaimed, standing on the piazza, which through cleared spaces, here and there, showed bewildering pictures of shimmering water beyond. Attractive little passenger steamers dressed in bright new paint, gay awnings and shiny brass trimmings, glided about.

As they re-entered the car, and Mrs. Loring gave the order "home," she said, "And to think all this wild nature and its possibilities for camp life is only twenty minutes by trolley from the shops!"

The winding boulevard to the summit of Queen Anne Hill disclosed at every higher turn a view which is conceded to be unsurpassed, the world over.

Spreading its sheet of silver like a voluminous mantle, Puget Sound, which is acknowledged by those who know, to be the most beautiful body of water anywhere, rolled away in distant perspective through two thousand miles of shore line.

Locked in the arms of two mountain ranges, the Cascades to the east, the Olympics to the west, it rests in unmolested quiet in their

sheltering protection, undisturbed by the storms which tear the vitals of the Pacific, or the icy blasts and winds of the interior. It is gentle and kindly in its disposition, assuring the voyager a safe conduct over its smiling surface into the thousands of its harbors and bays and long arms, which penetrate back into black forests of great antiquity.

To the north, stand the tall, grim, hoary Selkirks, giants in ice armor. Mount Baker, to the southeast, rises solitary from the plateau in lonely state and separated by many miles from any other elevation. It stands in resigned silence, reminiscent of an active, terrible past, when, as a belching volcano, it poured out destruction and desolation, but now it is covered by a shroud of white, which kindly veils all traces of its former forces of devastation.

To the south, on guard, like a faithful watchdog, Mount Rainier rears its massive bulk, pushing its crest far above the clouds as if to pierce with searching eye the higher altitudes.

And so, beautiful Seattle, the queen city of the Pacific, sits in royal state surrounded by loyal vassals and henchmen, that, encircling

her in strong arms, reassure her of unassailable security.

The next morning at breakfast, the hostess announced that she expected to entertain in her Japanese Tea Garden some of the members of two associations representative of the results accomplished by the women of the Northwest.

"These women are united in working for the best interests of Washington and Oregon," she explained, "and many of them prove capable business managers, being at the head of organizations for promoting land improvement, irrigation, agriculture and forestry. The absence of men in the Northwest throws much of this work on the women, who have risen to the requirements and made good. The P. W. N.'s and the A. D. W.'s enroll as members some of the brightest and cleverest women I have ever met."

"But, Con," queried Eleanor in perplexity, "what on earth do those initials stand for?"

"The P. W. N's are the Progressive Women of the Northwest, and the A. D. W's are the Agricultural Daughters of Washington."

"Gee whiz! Sound like initials for a new style of corsets," hinted the incorrigible.

From Mrs. Loring's ballroom one entered the Tea Garden by long glass doors where from their thresholds was revealed a vista of surpassing beauty and oriental enchantment.

Faithfully reproduced from the Japanese model the interior disclosed a garden surrounded by walls of boxwood hedge and roofed with interlacing vines of growing wistaria and cherry blossom; which also formed little bowers enclosing cosy nooks and shadowy seats in the foliage.

From branching canopies hung long clusters of gracefully pendant bloom in shaded mauve, lavender and pink. Through the mass of leafage, as one gazed upward, was seen the vaulted heavens of a summer night, with the throbbing sparkle of the stars and the blaze of a golden crescent.

In the center, a fountain of perfumed waters trickled over transparent rocks through which shone electric lights that automatically changed in color from green to crimson and white to lavender.

Banked in masses around the supporting posts of the trellis the cherry blossoms insistently clamored for first place in this beauty

contest. The exquisite shell-like petals in their resolving pinks challenged the eye.

Off in the distance, beyond the walling hedge and rising far up into the sky of night, could be seen Japan's monarch mountain in all the splendor of its majestic solitude.

Following the horizon from peerless Fuji-yama, Buddhist temples and tombs were outlined in faint receding lines.

In oriental fashion, the light was soft and alluring in its dimness. There was no other illumination, save the mellow tints cast by the silken lanterns among the foliage, the twinkle of the stars, and the moonlight beyond the lacework of wistaria.

The guests stood or moved about, or sat in groups in shadowy nooks. Eleanor found herself far beyond the reaches of her eastern conversational limits. Mighty forests, fathomless lakes, glacial mountains and the converting of deserts into orchards were topics which the social circles of the East might rank with the unemployed. She became an absorbed listener and was interested to learn that Washington is called the Evergreen State because its forests are almost exclusively composed of fir, cedar, spruce and hemlock; and

that fir, which only a few years ago was considered unfit for interior finish, is now completely suited to that purpose, due to the modern kiln-drying which removes its pitchy quality; and that eastern architects are advocating its preference to hard woods on account of the ability of the mills to furnish it absolutely clear in extra widths and great lengths.

"Red cedar grows to be immense in size, Miss Rayner," ventured a dainty little woman gowned by Paquin, but owner and manager of one of the largest and most flourishing logging camps on the Stillaquamish River near Arlington. "We have been asked," she continued, "why we fell these noble giants, and the droll answer given in most of the 'boomer literature' is that 'They tickled the stars and had to be cut down.'"

"Your boomer's answer certainly rises to the height of the subject," laughingly rejoined Eleanor. "A life among the trees strikes me as a very exhilarating one," she added.

"It is, and I consider the days I spend in camp the most delightful in the calendar. I have a tract of spruce forest on the straits of San Juan de Fuca, which is the principal spruce section, and here I live like an abo-

rigine. My college sons prefer to spend their vacations here, where they live the life of Nimrod in every sense."

Eleanor gazed at this Dresden china creation in speechless amazement, and presently spoke her admiration, adding, "You Westerners are certainly wonders!"

"But I am *not* a Westerner. I was born in Massachusetts. But—I've learned to know better," with a whimsical headshake and eyetwinkle. "And if there is anything wonderful about us it is because we are both Easterner and Westerner combined, while you of the Atlantic seaboard gloat in your isolation from anything so crude."

"Oh, you are merciless!" laughed the girl.

"No. I don't mean it that way. But isn't it true that even your travels take you still farther into the sunrise? Statistics show that it is mostly the dweller of the Middle West who explores the scenic treasures of our golden Pacific shores. I am hoping my burning zeal may induce greater loyalty among eastern Americans of the leisure class to tour west of the Atlantic instead of wholly confining their sight-seeing across its waters."

"Is Mrs. Porter converting you, sweet

cousin?" asked Mrs. Loring, who now joined them.

"She wouldn't have to more than half try; I am inoculated and it's 'taking.'"

"Like a good case of vaccination. Then probably some light refreshment may sustain you during the process. Come, I want you to sit here, for we are presently to have tea," and she seated them by one of the little tables the Japanese were placing about.

Attired in native costume, these men moved silently and deftly, bringing a light refreshment of rice, fruit and tea, served on Royal Satsuma.

"You see, Miss Rayner," continued the little zealot, "there is something out here which gets into one's blood and transforms the methodical, conservative circulation into a flaming torrent of enthusiasm. And the changed creature becomes a devotee of the great out-of-doors cult, which, scratching the surface of the earth, is made a power and builds another city. Do you wonder we are loyal?"

"No, no, indeed. I feel like shouldering a pick and shovel, taking a hoe and a watering-pot and going to work this minute."

Mrs. Porter rejoined smiling, "I should

like you to see my camp. I consider it an achievement for Snohomish County, which has incredible natural resources. Its situation, geographically, has made it one of the leading industrial counties of the Pacific Coast. On account of its central location it is the best log market on Puget Sound—(and this means the best in the world)—because the best body of timber now standing in the world is on Puget Sound. Its large mining and agricultural interests, with its mild climate, cheap fuel, good labor conditions, fine transportation facilities by land and water, cheap water power in its hilly districts, and a rapidly growing, Oriental, Alaskan and home market, are some of the significant facts. But you will call me a 'boomer.' You will say I am advertising for the sake of inducing the unwary to invest. I assure you, I have no personal ax to grind. I am an enthusiast, pure and simple,—I do not wish to sell off my forests in city lots. I am not mapping out a boom town, I am not trying to finance a mine, a lumber camp or a fruit ranch. But I am trying to induce my countrymen and countrywomen to travel in their own wonderful

land, to see its scenic marvels, to give more than a passing glance to the possibilities lying in its immense stretches of undeveloped territory; and to pause and give thanks they were born under the flag which unfurls its inspiring colors over such a territory."

CHAPTER VIII

THE day of sailing brought a thick fog, which overhung Puget Sound and shut off all sight of anything above the water line.

As the day grew older, the atmosphere cleared, and as the mist gradually lifted, the scenic pageant was spread forth in all the splendor of its vast extent.

The early sailing put the *Silvermere* well on her way before breakfast. The voyagers had gone aboard the night before, but Eleanor rose early, determined, her father said, not to miss a square inch of the scenery.

"Well, the scenery is worth while all right," yawned Kenneth, "but I'm hungry," he emphasized as he strolled on deck two hours after the others.

"What mountain is that over there?"

"Oh, boo! Anybody knows what that is. That's—that's Mount—why, that's Pike's Peak!"

"Oh, you fraud! Stop your nonsense, and go and ask Captain Canfield," commanded the girl.

"Hold on, I know," persisted the boy. "That's Mount Roosevelt!"

"Mount Roosevelt?" laughed his uncle. "There is no Mount Roosevelt."

"Well, if there isn't, there ought to be, and I'm going to name it now. They changed Mount Tacoma into Mount Rainier, didn't they?"

Captain Canfield joined them at this moment, and the question was asked him. He settled it by announcing the disputed name to be Mount Baker.

"Baker? Who was Baker, any way? He's all to the mustard. I'm going to call it Teddy's Peak. Put that down in your book, El."

"This certainly is a great waterway, Captain," and Mr. Rayner motioned him to a chair as he handed the cigars.

"Yes, but you will find the course even more attractive above Vancouver, which is guarded practically all the way up by a succession of islands on which are lofty peaks with snow-clad summits. The channels are very deep and the waters wonderfully green, and at night brilliantly phosphorescent."

"Is it ever tempestuous and rough?"

"As placid as a lake, except the waters of the Gulf of Georgia, where the open sea washes in through the Inlet or Strait of Juan de Fuca; and there we get a bit of a roll for a short time. We take on an Indian pilot at Victoria."

"Oh, delightful. Is he a really truly, or a half-breed, or only a vaudeville article?"

"He's straight goods," interrupted Kenneth. "Bob Sherwood knows him. Went to Nome with him. He's a cracker-jack, Bob says,—a thoroughbred, all wool and a yard wide, Haida Indian."

"Your Bob seems to know all the celebrities of the Northwest, from the Man Primeval to the latest human product of the higher civilization," said Eleanor, looking at her cousin with freezing doubt.

"Few realize, I think, Mr. Rayner, the striking points, statistically, in Alaskan matters. I mean the general public, especially. That its area is one-sixth of that of the entire United States, and more than a seventh as large as Europe is not appreciated even by the traveler, until he comes to see it for himself. And then the matter of climate. This I find a great staggerer. Most people consider

Alaska a cold-storage plant for the States, which, of course, is true of the winters in the north and interior of the territory; but on the coast south of the Aleutian Chain the country possesses a really very mild climate. In Sitka, for instance, in the past fifty years a record of eight degrees below zero is the lowest registered; and the mercury fell below only four times in that period. The Queen Charlotte Islands are remarkably balmy and warm."

"This is due entirely to the warm Japanese current, of course," added Mr. Rayner.

"Where's the best place to buy totem poles, Captain?" inquired Kenneth.

With a quizzical laughing glance the captain queried, "What is your game, my boy?"

"My cousin is making a collection of American curiosities, and she wants a totem pole or two for umbrella and parasol sticks."

She merely gave him a withering glance and otherwise ignored his teasing.

"Wrangel has a quantity; and on any of the Islands of the Archipelago their grotesque and hideous carvings will be found in every direction. The devices indicate that the native races of Indians were of Asiatic origin, and not of the Redskins of North America. These

natives are very friendly and hospitable, and students in ethnology find much in the language, customs and arts of the Haidas, who are undoubtedly the most remarkable of all the different tribes, to resemble the Aztecs. Their semblance to Japanese and Chinese supports the theory of Mongolian origin," replied the captain.

"You speak of all the different tribes. How many are there?" questioned Mr. Rayner.

"According to the census reports there are five distinct tribes," he answered. "The Innuit or Esquimaux; the Aleuts of the Aleutian Islands; the Tinnehs; the Thlinkets of Southern Alaska; and the Haidas, who live mostly on Queen Charlotte Islands and the Prince of Wales Archipelago."

"What landings do you consider will prove most interesting to make, Captain?"

"After Victoria and Vancouver, Ketchikan, which is the first town reached in the Territory. It is built on piles along the water's edge and, like Asbury Park, boasts a board walk. Wrangel, at the mouth of the Stikine River, will come next and prove very interesting. It was formerly a Russian military post. It has

entirely lost its old importance, however, and is now occupied mostly by Indians,—a branch of the Thlinkets whose quaint totem poles make a conspicuous showing. Juneau, the principal city of southeastern Alaska, and now the capital, will be of especial interest to you, Mr. Rayner, as it is in the mining region and near the Silver Bow and Treadwell Mines, as you know."

"Yes, I shall require sufficient time to inspect the works, and investigate the resources and out-put," he replied without enlightening the captain of his large operations there.

"Our next stop will be our destination, Skagway, unless you wish to make a landing at Haines, near which is located Fort Seward with its garrison of United States soldiers."

"Sure thing, Uncle Jim! Let's do the military."

"Lieutenant Shotwell is stationed here, and we will pay our respects."

"Hooray! And they say he went to college," quoted the boy, dancing a clog step.

"How far is it from Juneau to Skagway, Captain?" asked Eleanor.

"About a hundred miles up the Lynn Canal, which is in reality a narrow canyon, with high

precipitous mountains lining both sides, down which nineteen glaciers pour their ice cascades. This inlet is considered the most beautiful of all those cutting into the shore line. The tides here at Skagway rise from sixteen to eighteen feet."

"What sort of a city or town is it?" asked Eleanor.

"Nothing doin', I'll bet a nickel," sneered Kenneth.

"It is a progressive city where one can live comfortably and enjoyably. It has a stone courthouse, substantial churches and schools, a well equipped hospital, very good shops, and electric lighting and telephones. The homes are attractive, with pretty lawns and flower beds. Hotel accommodations are very good. Some of the hotels are lighted by electricity and heated by steam, and possess many conveniences."

Looking about him at the shore line, the captain rose, and taking out his watch, said:

"If you will come forward with me, sir, I will show you the southern point of Vancouver Island. We are nearing the Straits of Juan de Fuca. Shall you be going ashore to-night, sir, or wait until morning to land at Victoria?"

"We shall remain aboard to-night, Captain."

Kenneth said that Vancouver and Victoria were too English for him. He felt as if he must be only a few miles from Liverpool; and with ostentatious patriotism, he rebelled at the flags flying from the State Buildings, saying with bluster, "they have no right to fly any but American flags on this continent."

The *Silvermere* then steamed ahead with nose pointed for Ketchikan, after taking aboard the Indian pilot.

Eleanor and her father were sitting aft, when Kenneth dashed up and asked excitedly, "Have you seen the brave, Uncle Jim? Gosh, but he's all to the 'candy!'"

"Where is he?" asked Eleanor without looking up from her magazine.

"On the bridge with the captain."

"Does he speak English?"

"Like Lord Chesterfield, b'gosh, and," continued the boy enthusiastically, "he was educated at Carlisle and the University of Wisconsin."

"College graduate, eh?" asked his uncle.

"Sure thing."

"Whew! Oh, this Northwest!" Mr.

Rayner whistled softly. "I shall expect to find even the seals already trained. Ask Captain Canfield and your redskin Sophocles to take luncheon with us at one o'clock."

"Shall we stop at Ketchikan?" asked Eleanor.

"If it would interest you to do so. We shall ask our Indian what he considers really worth while in stops, because, as you know, my time is limited. And I arranged to arrive at Skagway no later than the 12th; Churchill expects me then. I shall go now and interview the brave on the subject. Will see you at luncheon," and he left her and went forward to the bridge.

In and out, among the islands of this entrancing land-locked waterway, the *Silvermere* glided, first near one shore, and again far across a strait or gulf to the other coast, where promontories of black, somber rock slid down sharp to the water's edge, there to be lost in dark forbidding currents.

Eleanor lay back in her steamer chair in the stern, eagerly scanning the panorama of receding pine-clad hills with their foaming cascades, tearing through the rifts in their race to the waters below, of the fiords and bays indenting

with sharp and rugged outline the entire coast line.

Back of all this reared the towering heights of snow and ice in all the mystery and majesty of their solitude.

She wondered, as she gazed shoreward, if life behind those adamantine walls of stone and ice could be endurable in this day of electric locomotion and intensified luxury.

Was it necessary, after all, that one's gowns and hats be made on the Rue de la Paix? She scanned her own perfection of apparel and, with a little pat of satisfaction, questioned not the *raison d'être* of her modiste.

Again Kenneth dashed up and interrupted with impatience: "Our savage is a fake. He's been to Broadway and his wife wears—clothes! Isn't that the limit? Here was I picturing him in blankets and feathers, and instead, his tweeds are the newest cut and his gloves and neckwear the latest novelty. Gee whiz! wouldn't that jar you?"

"Oh, well, dry your eyes and try to bear it. Perhaps we can prevail upon him to give us a dress rehearsal in native costume before we arrive."

"I'll warrant he lives in a Colonial house in-

stead of a tepee, and has a car instead of a pony."

"Never mind, cheer up; perhaps it's not so bad as that."

Heiro now appeared and announced luncheon.

Eleanor and Kenneth made their way to the saloon, and found Mr. Rayner, Captain Canfield and the Indian standing awaiting her coming.

He certainly was a superb specimen, towering above the others by many inches. His penetrating eyes looked admiringly at her during the formal words of her father's introduction. As they were seating themselves, Eleanor turned, and asked if it were true that some of the Indian women smeared their faces with black grease.

"Quite true. Many of the native Alaskans have strange customs. The Thlinket women wear a *labrette,* which is an ornament of silver, ivory, bone or wood, according to the financial importance of the wearer. It is thrust through the under lip, spear like, and is about four or five inches in length. They use black paint, not grease, as a complexion preserver; and the effect of the combination is, from your stand-

point, grotesque, but from theirs, quite elegant and alluring."

"Then you do not consider yourself as of them."

"Yes; I am a full-blooded Alaskan Indian of the Stikine tribe, and adhere to the customs of my people, with the single exception of approving of their fashion of mutilating and disfiguring the body. My American education is responsible for that, no doubt."

"It must be novel to be both savage and civilized. It certainly is a wide range, and in that respect you have the advantage of us. And your wife, does she equally enjoy the dual life?"

Here he drew up his face with a quizzical expression of doubt, and slowly shaking his head, replied, "Frankly, I think she prefers chiffons and lingerie to beads and blankets."

"This vocation of pilot—I don't quite reconcile to Broadway. There's a long stretch between the Battery and Behring Straits," said Mr. Rayner.

"Truly, but you must remember I was born a pilot, and a fisherman. My ancestors have sailed these waters since the beginning of time,

and could land a walrus or seal as readily as—as you can corner the stock market."

A general laugh greeted this.

"One on you, Uncle Jim," hazarded Kenneth.

The four remaining days of the trip up through the land-locked waterway were delightful in every respect. The weather was perfect and the landing proved as interesting as Captain Canfield had predicted.

On the fifth day out from Seattle the *Silvermere* glided to her berth in the deep, beautiful blue-green waters of the Lynn Canal off Skagway.

Mr. Rayner was disappointed not to find Churchill already there to meet him; but instead, an Indian, who shot out from shore in a canoe bearing a letter, which read:

"There is trouble with machinery newly set up at the Polar Star which will keep me an hour or two. To leave the men and the work at this particular time would be hazardous. I was unable to send a wireless as the station is at the Aurora Borealis. I regret all this deeply. You will find the motor car at the landing to bring you to the Polar Star.

"Respectfully,

"JOHN CHURCHILL."

After seeing Eleanor and explaining the plan, Mr. Rayner prepared to go ashore. Kenneth felt that to be left would prove a sad punishment and begged his uncle to take him, saying, "Gee whiz, Uncle Jim, you don't expect a fellow to lie around on a deck like a coil of rope! Take me, and I'll prove a guide, philosopher and friend; see if I don't."

"All right—but be quick about it."

They steamed away in the launch, and Eleanor watched them to the landing and into the car.

Churchill received them as it drew up at Hales and the two men met. With a handshake and a steady look into each other's eyes, both mentally approved.

Mr. Rayner was agreeably impressed with his man, while Kenneth became his sworn slave for all time.

Churchill showed them all about, and after going over the Polar-Star plant, they pushed on to the Aurora. Mr. Rayner frankly expressed his gratification, and indicated plainly his appreciation of Churchill's work.

"Mr. Churchill, you have more than met the requirements, and I am greatly pleased."

After a thorough inspection of the entire

properties Churchill took them to The Limit, his bungalow, where luncheon was served. Kenneth was ecstatic. The mines had been interesting, but this shack was a boy's dream of all that a boy loves, and before the hour of departure Kenneth had been invited by its host to remain a few days longer.

With some hesitation Mr. Rayner said:

"Don't allow your hospitality to exceed your judgment, Mr. Churchill. Kenneth is all right, but he's a kid."

Churchill laughed and said he would "try and bear it."

They all rode back to Skagway and left Mr. Rayner at the landing where the launch was waiting.

As it pushed off the boy called out:

"Good-by, Uncle Jim; tell El she isn't in it."

CHAPTER IX

HORSES' hoofs were plainly heard; they came nearer and nearer; then stopped. A light step upon the piazza, then on the threshold.

Churchill, lying on a couch with his head in blood-stained bandages, wondered. Then a voice of dangerous possibilities, asked, "May I come in?"

He leaped to his feet; she was already in the room.

"And you are hurt, too? The 'phone mentioned only Kenneth."

She spoke with easy composure, as though she had known him always. Looking about with solicitude and anxious questioning she asked, "Where is he? I should like to see him." Her eyes swept the interior, and came back again to his in quiet challenge.

So far, Churchill had stood much as a man might in the presence of the President, or royalty. He had not quite come around to the realization of what his eyes were doing. But

she did not notice them or if she did she did not seem conscious of their intentness.

He motioned toward the bedroom, saying, "He has been asleep for an hour."

A voice somewhat muffled called:

"Yes, but I'm darned wide awake now, all right. Come in, El, how the deuce did you know?"

The boy was swathed in yards of antiseptic gauze, but the mouthpiece was still in commission. He looked somewhat helpless and battered,—a novel *rôle,* that of the invalid, for Kenneth; one eye peeked out from the cream-colored folds, but the other was in absolute retirement. She came over to the bed-side, sitting down on a low chair beside it, and in gentle caress, put her hand on his, answering:

"A 'phone from Mr. Churchill's man to Father said you had been hurt, and I came."

"Where's Uncle Jim? Didn't he come?"

"No. You don't give me an overwhelming reception, I must admit."

"Oh, cut it out. Where's Uncle Jim?"

"At Juneau."

"At Juneau?" he echoed. "What for?"

"To attend to some very urgent matters. Mr. Sheridan is in trouble,—strikes, I believe, and Father started at once."

"How did he go?" asked the boy.

"On the *Silvermere.*" She was smiling at his puzzled state, as he hastily added:

"What's your joint then?"

"The hotel at Skagway, with Hannah and Hughes as chaperons."

"But how did you get out here?" he urged impatiently.

"I rode Twostep."

"Alone?" shrieked he.

"No," shaking her head, enjoying his suspense, and purposely prolonging it,—"Father sent the horses by a freight steamer with Hughes, who is outside now."

Here Kenneth called to Churchill, who had remained in the living-room, to come in, and related the news as the man came and stood at the door.

"Startling disclosures at both ends, it seems," he remarked. "Kenneth's condition and mine are so plainly obvious, that apologies for the absence of dinner coats seem rather superfluous," and he put his hand to his head, smiling.

"We're a fine pair to draw to," squeaked the voice from the bed.

"Wasn't your father's departure rather unexpected?" Churchill asked, turning to her.

"Yes, very; Mr. Sheridan wired him last night late, and the *Silvermere* got away early this morning. It was too late to 'phone you. But tell me, how did all this happen?" and she looked up at him as she asked this, inwardly acknowledging that this engineer of her father's had most compelling gray eyes.

"Kenneth and I have been asking ourselves that ever since we picked ourselves up this afternoon."

"Picked ourselves up? You picked me up, you mean. Why, El, he had the sense all knocked out of him; but he pulled himself out of the smash, hunted up my remains, and carried me into Hale's. The car had turned turtle, and it and we were strung along the landscape like the Spanish warships off Santiago."

"But what caused the car to behave so badly?" she asked, looking at Churchill.

"A front tire burst; we were coasting down a hill, and were suddenly shot into space," he explained.

"Exceeding the speed limit, no doubt," with an arch glance, then she continued:

"And after you reached Hale's, wherever that is, then what happened?"

Kenneth here struck in emphatically,—"He did the Red-Cross trick, plastered me up, and draped me in these chiffons."

"What time did all these festivities occur?" she queried of Churchill.

"About two o'clock, I think. Let me see, —we had luncheon at half-past twelve, didn't we, Ken? And started for the Polar Star about one; and the unpleasantness occurred on that second hill just beyond the railroad trestle."

"Hill?" echoed the boy. "Gosh, what nerve! There isn't a *hill* in Alaska; just a straight up-and-down mountain every time. Jack, I don't believe a tire burst. I am just dead sure the machine got dizzy and went waggity!"

"We'll have an inquest to-morrow over the carcass," laughed the man.

Nothing had escaped the girl's eyes from the moment she entered the door of this eerie bungalow, perched so defiantly on the projecting crag of a bare rock mountain,—a small

plateau not quite 200 feet square to which the roadway had graciously consented to climb, but abruptly to leave again as if in sudden terror at its dizzy height. This plateau was closely crowded by the bungalow, garage, stable, and quarters for Churchill's Filipino servant Antonio, and his native Indian guide. The bungalow, perching on the very edge of the precipice, with impertinent daring, had gained a monopoly of outlook, but with the appalling depth straight down of 2000 feet to the bottom of the cañon, hardly left itself a leg to stand on.

It was between eight and nine o'clock when Eleanor had ridden up in the soft daylight of the Alaskan evening, and she was enabled to see in the radiant dusk the audacity of such a location for a dwelling. The piazza encircled the building like a protecting arm without which it would have appeared in imminent danger of tipping over the edge, and from every side marvelous vistas of immeasurable distance were outspread. The interior revealed the taste of its occupant no less, for though simplicity ruled, luxury and comfort showed in the texture, coloring and quality of the furnishing. Oriental rugs covered floors and

couches, and Remington and Gibson crowded every inch of wall space not already filled with pelts, guns and vicious looking revolvers of every sort.

The road from Skagway to the Aurora Borealis traversed sections where miners' huts and shacks were grouped in little settlements, and the men were mostly lawless fellows, many being desperate characters—among them half-breeds, Chinese, escaped Russian convicts from Siberia, and Asiatics of low caste.

In their eyes, a girl of Eleanor's type, who dared to ride through their section, unattended save by a dapper little groom, whom Churchill merely considered a stylish accessory, would be reason for a general commotion in their ranks. Many of these miners rode into Skagway during the evening, and returned in differing degrees of exhilaration and intoxication. As her return involved at least a risk of insult, Churchill decided she must be spared that possibility. Though light, it was nearly ten o'clock, and many of the men would be coming and going until midnight.

Churchill, who had left Kenneth and Eleanor, and gone into the living-room, stood try-

ing to work out the problem, for he saw the necessity of a more formidable escort than Hughes afforded.

Suddenly Kenneth, with the same realization of the danger, called to him:

"Hi, Jack, Eleanor better roost in our coop to-night; Hughes wouldn't be worth a darn in a scrap."

The girl turned upon him with quick alarm and blazing eyes, urging in hushed tones:

"Don't, Kenneth, don't. Are you utterly lacking in good sense?"

"Search me! Do you know those miners between here and Skagway are devils, and would kill a man for two beans?" replied the boy.

Churchill here came to the door, and stood without entering the room, saying:

"Miss Rayner, my Indian shall accompany you and Hughes back to Skagway, as the machine is out of business. I suggest that you start now."

It was plain that she was to be disposed of without even being consulted.

She rose, standing very straight and tall, and swept with her eyes the distance from Kenneth

to Churchill, letting them rest upon him in tolerant *hauteur* as she said quietly:

"Thanks, very much. It is very kind indeed;—this solicitude of you both; but I shall return with Hughes alone. Will you please let him know that I am ready to start?" and turning back to the bed, she leaned over and said, gently:

"Good-night, Ken dear, I shall see you tomorrow;" and then went out.

As she came into the larger room, where Churchill was standing in the outer doorway awaiting her, the realization of her great beauty startled the man.

"Your quarters are charming, Mr. Churchill," she said, coming toward him, as they passed out on to the piazza. "And do you remain here all winter? I should think you would go into Skagway."

They were descending the low porch steps and as they came up to the horses, he took Twostep's bridle rein from Hughes, ready to assist her to the saddle. She put her foot in his hand, rising gracefully. For a few moments neither spoke, she being absorbed watching his ready skill in arranging her skirt and stirrup, and examining the girths. He gave a

friendly pat to Twostep's arched neck, saying, "There you are, old man;" and cemented a lasting devotion from the animal.

"So you won't have my Indian?" smiling up at her.

"No, thank you. Hughes will do very nicely. I shall see Kenneth to-morrow. Good-night." And she was off.

CHAPTER X

CHURCHILL stood a moment watching them recede, but the intentness of his look on this occasion did not convey any especial admiration for her seat in the saddle or the grace of her riding, which at any other time might have appealed to him strongly.

Turning suddenly, he dashed inside, pressed the button for Antonio and ordered that Ackoutan saddle Haida at once. He then went to Kenneth's room as the boy was settling himself to go to sleep, and leaning down over him, was about to speak, when the boy said, without looking up:

"Is that you, Jack? El gone? It took her a long enough time, by gum! I thought you never was comin' back!"

"*Was?*" Then the man waited with an eye twinkle.

"Oh, darn you. Cut it out, you ain't no prof!"

This met with a hearty laugh, then his voice took a tender note as he asked: "Are you tired, old man? Can I ask you a question?"

"Sure. Spit it out."

"Is Hughes absolutely trustworthy?"

"Cert. He understands all about horses." Undeniably this was a false lead, and after a few moments, Churchill tried another.

"How long has Mr. Rayner had Hughes?"

"Oh, a long time; a month or two."

Plainly he was not making himself clear, nor getting information on a vital point.

"Well, go to sleep, old chap. Tony will come in and fix you up for the night."

"Good-night, Jack; are you going to bed now, too?"

"Presently. I'm going to get some air, first."

As he returned to the living-room, Antonio stood immovable, awaiting orders.

Army training told, and the imitative talent of the Filipino, like that of the Japanese, was superlative in result. The little yellow Malay was the epitome of discipline and never addressed a superior without saluting. But this time there was delay.

"Get my boots and spurs," and as the servant made no move, the other looked up from the chair while busy with his slippers.

With a jerk the hand came up to the head,

and the little image wheeled and entered the den.

Haida could be heard outside as Ackoutan led her up. The moments passed, and evidently Tony did not seem able to find the boots, lying plainly within sight, immediately under his eyes, while his noisy efforts in impossible places aroused his master's suspicions.

"Bring those boots at once, you damned heathen."

This proved convincing and Tony shot to his master's feet with boots, spurs and pistol belt, adjusting them in silence, but the little expressionless face argued many things, and a very mild voice dared, as he took from the rack the six-shooter:

"Tony and Ackoutan go Skaigui; watch young leddy? Please?"

This met with frigid silence as Churchill made ready to go out. From the door he commanded, with telling glance and tone, while pulling on his gloves.

"You are to sit up by Master Kenneth's door until I return," and he strode out.

Ackoutan, waiting like a figure cut in granite, held Churchill's horse, and over his shoulder, by a long loose rein, his own Indian

pony Amunkta, a mare of rare intelligence and training.

"I am going alone, Ackoutan," Churchill announced laconically as he mounted. To the Indian this called for no argument, as in silence he rose into his own saddle. Churchill threw him a glance, and his voice rang out in clear icy tones:

"You are to wait here, see?"

Three solemn, deliberate nods of the head, while the Indian sat rigid on his horse, standing immovable as a statue, the Indian's face set and grim, staring off across the continent with the keen eyes of the savage.

He waited until Churchill was well out of sight, and then stealthily signaled his horse toward the precipitous trail, which, but a few hundred feet distant, dropped from the very edge of the cañon. Here it traversed zig-zag, with a wonderful economy of road space, down and around and out on to rock shelves and ledges, hanging like scaffolding against the perpendicular wall. At a certain depth, the trail then darted straight up again, making the climb perilously similar to a loop-the-loop performance. But the Indian and his pony, with unruffled equanimity, went jauntily on

and up where the trail came out on the road level. But before rounding over the upper edge, Ackoutan stopped and listened. He had calculated he would head off not only Churchill, but Miss Rayner and the dapper Hughes. There was no definition in Ackoutan's vocabulary that could explain the dapper, horsey groom or the reason for him to the understanding or intelligence of the savage.

Eleanor and Hughes had ridden serenely on after leaving The Limit, and once Hughes had turned, saying respectfully:

"I think, Miss, someone is following us. I hear horse's hoofs. Shall we step up a bit, Miss?"

"Certainly not, Hughes. Surely you are not timid?"

"Not for myself, Miss; but that blithering, red-skinned haythen back there would give a man the creeps."

"Do you mean Mr. Churchill's Indian? Why, he is his master's trusty bodyguard; and Mr. Churchill wanted to send him back with us to Skagway as escort."

"Oh, the Blessed Virgin be praised! Sure, Miss, this is a terrible counthry! There's Roosians, and Red-skins, and miners, and

trappers, and Chinee, and not a dacent Irishman above ground."

By this time she was quietly laughing with head averted. Suddenly he whispered in suppressed excitement, "He's comin', Miss, indade he is."

"Who's coming? Hughes, I'm ashamed of you."

"Why, the Injun, Miss."

To Hughes, an Indian and a Chinaman were equally impossible. His hereditary fighting endowments utterly forsook the doughty Irishman when confronted with such material. His belligerent attitude collapsed.

Churchill had caught up, but remained far enough behind to avoid, as he supposed, being recognized. He forgot his white bandage, which the hat did not conceal, and which Hughes was quick to notice with relief upon turning in the saddle for a backward glance. The groom preferred to keep the identity of their pursuer from Eleanor, and suppressed a wink and knowing smile at the gallantry of the following horseman.

As Churchill approached the miner's settlement he found his suspicions verified. They had seen the girl and Hughes ride by, and

were making ready to follow to satisfy their curiosity, and learn who the strangers were. The loneliness and isolation of their habitation, and the absence of visitors, gave a rare novelty to almost any unusual circumstance.

Churchill heard the clashing of spurs and saddle straps and the stamping of hoofs, and the swearing which was their sotto voce accompaniment to all of their undertakings. He galloped into their trail, just as they were dashing out.

"Hold! Where are you fellows going?"

They halted, but vouchsafed no answer, but rather sullen looks and mutterings in question of his authority to one another. Red Pete, a dangerous reptile, asked of his neighbor, under his breath:

"What the devil's that to him?"

"Hold your damned tongue," came the reply, which told for Churchill's standing in that quarter.

"I want you fellows to understand that that young lady is not to be bothered. She's the daughter of my Chief and has the right of way on these roads in any direction; savvy?" and Jack looked with stern command straight into the eyes bent on him;—some of them sly and

treacherous, some sullen and shifting, some bold and daring. He had pulled Haida up facing them, all bunched as they were together, and sat slowly scrutinizing each swarthy face, many of which showed lines of dare-devil courage, a desperate struggle with hardship, and exposure,—strong all, in the qualities that make for the waging of life's battles in and under almost primeval conditions in remote regions.

"Were you fellows going into Skagway—on business?"

"Can't say we was, boss. But when we see the girl ride by, thought we'd jog along and point out the scenery, and be sociable-like; hey, boys?"

"Sure thing," roared from many throats.

"Well, I'll attend to the scenery and the sociability, see?" and Churchill's face emphasized his words.

"Sweetee on girlee," came from a huge Chinaman on the back line, with a jovial drawl.

Churchill's face gave no evidence he had heard as he wheeled Haida prepared to ride off.

"He don't own the girl, and I'll be damned if I'll take any dictates from him. I'll foller her, if I want ter, and he can go to Hell."

Churchill turned Haida as if her hind feet had been on a fifty-cent piece, so perfect was the circle described. With square-set jaw and level blazing eyes, he came abreast of his man,—a desperate, mutinous character, a half-breed of despicable antecedents, of towering massive frame, and with a record of more than one scalp to his belt. He was called by the men Black Sam, because they couldn't pronounce his half-Indian, half-Russian name.

Jack narrowed his eyes a trifle as he pushed close, so that he could look well under the slouched hat-brim into the bloodshot, forbidding eyes; and said with steel-like cutting clearness in deliberate even tones:

"The first man who *forgets* to be respectful to that young lady, gets some of my hardware," and his hand went up to his pistol belt and rested on his six-shooter.

A moment of absolute silence followed this, while every man seemed bronze, or ice, or stone, and Churchill's glance traveled from one

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to the other as though delivering to each a personal challenge.

In a moment he wheeled, and was again on the road.

Ackoutan had dismounted and crouched, peering over the edge of his hiding-place at a level below the road. He had heard the conference, and seeing that his master was in no need of his services and was now pushing on toward Skagway, he decided to remain in ambush until he should see him safely on the return to Aurora.

Ackoutan had, by this time, arrived at conclusions of his own, and while Indian chivalry was rudimentary, it possessed enough of the elements of civilized gallantry to enable the savage to recognize the article.

As Churchill rode on, he could feel the wound in his head throbbing from the exertion. The delay with the miners had given Hughes and his mistress considerable headway, so they were now quite out of sight.

A few miles of quick riding brought down the intervening distance, and Churchill soon halted on a high point of the road, which controlled a sweeping view of its windings clear

to the outskirts of the city. From this eminence he watched and saw them proceed, and then arrive, safely within its limits. He then turned and touching Haida lightly with the spurs, rode homewards, with thoughts strange and disturbed.

CHAPTER XI

A voice called from the porch, "Good-morning! How is your patient? May I come in?"

Churchill concluded that either he must have been dozing over his coffee, or that she certainly possessed a witch-like power to appear suddenly at a man's threshold, much as a radiant goddess in all her effulgent brightness might flash her intangible presence before his dazed senses.

As he sat over a later breakfast than usual, he had not heard the horses as they entered the drive or her footsteps on the porch.

He came to his feet quickly, threw wide the door and bowed in soldierly manner.

"My patient is much better; good-morning, come in."

"And you?" looking at him from the corners of her eyes as she passed him with head slightly bent, and a smile of amused questioning.

"Quite well, thank you." He drew a com-

fortable chair for her with its back to the glare.

She laughed outright at this, and seated herself with easy grace. As her eyes traveled up to his, she said:

"You are admirably trained, Mr. Churchill. Extremists say some women never face the light after they are thirty. But personally, I'm going to make it twenty. So your ride into Skagway last night did you no harm?"

"On the contrary, it proved most beneficial."

"Then you approve of violent exercise for a severe scalp wound?" and her riding whip lightly tapped her boot. "Father is rather conservative in his medical theories. He would, I fear, consider your treatment rather too—extreme."

"I may prescribe for myself what I would not for another. I am like the preacher who said, 'Do as I say; not as I do.'"

"Then you are a law unto yourself?"

"Only where discretion is the better part of—necessity."

"Ah! It was necessary for you to ride out last night?"

"Absolutely."

"You work over-time. You should strike for shorter hours."

"My errand was purely of a private nature."

He quietly determined that if she must fence, he would prove he could handle the foils and would parry her thrusts as long as she enjoyed the encounter. Her extreme loveliness gave to the contest a dangerous charm he dared not estimate.

"What are you two talking about, while a feller in here is dying of—of——"

"Curiosity!" Eleanor added, coming quickly into the bedroom. Going to his side she took his hand in hers.

Churchill did not follow.

"We were discussing the treatment of automobile victims. Dr. Churchill, I find, inclines to most heroic measures, while I adhere to sugar pills and a hot-water bottle."

"Speaking of sugar pills, won't you bring a fellow some candy?"

"How would Huyler's do?"

"Huyler's? Where did you get Huyler's up here?" he asked in amazement.

"Someone sent me a box from New York."

"Gee! Where is it?"

"Hughes has the box."

"Jack! Tony! Ackoutan! Anybody! Everybody! Go get the dog meat; Hughes has it."

"You incorrigible boy! I'm ashamed of you. You behave as though you owned the place, and everybody in it."

"Sure I do! Uncle Jim says, 'Always make yourself *felt*. *Impress* yourself and the point you wish to make on the people.' That's what I'm tryin' to do, isn't it? Only, instead of making myself *felt*, I'm trying to make myself *heard!*"

"Very nice indeed, sir; you have succeeded admirably. Here is the plunder:" and Churchill, coming in, handed the box to Eleanor; as he turned to leave the room, the boy interposed by saying:

"I want to get up; there's no fun in this. May I, Jack?"

"Not to-day, son."

"Holy Gee! You're a mean guy!" and the boy sputtered and muttered discontent, and jerked and threshed about in the bed. "Confound it! I'm all right. How's a feller to lie in bed such a ripping day? Think of all the things I want to do! I say, Jack, that's a

teaser!" and he pouted and sulked to his evident satisfaction.

Eleanor and Churchill realized this was all blustering humbug, to intimidate them to curtail the sentence, as Kenneth had overheard Jack say to Tony, when giving directions for his care, to avoid excitement because that might cause fever.

Ignoring the outburst, Churchill looked at his watch, saying, "Well, old man, I'm off. Keep sober, and don't get your feet wet." Turning to the girl, he said, "Miss Rayner, I have work which will keep me at the mines until evening. I hope you will remain with Kenneth all day. Tony has orders to serve your luncheon either with Kenneth here, or in the dining-room, as you may prefer; just let him know your wishes."

"Thanks, but considering the young gentleman's present cyclonic state, I should prefer to take myself and my Huyler's back to Skagway."

"Oh, forget it! I'll stay in bed, all right. Open up the goods! Here, Jack, don't go; help El open the crate, and let's have a feast first. Gee whiz! but they're peacherino! Oh, it's a shame to take the money!" and he swept

the top layer into his lap. "I'll bet a nickel the feller who sent these is your steady, El. Have some, Jack? By golly! He's a bully gink, whoever he is. Tell him to let the good work go on."

But Churchill walked to the door and turning, said:

"I must be off, old chap. I'm late now. Be good to yourself; make Tony give you what you want,—that is, within the limits of your physician's prescription. No getting up, remember, and no reading. If anything should occur to prevent my return to-night, I'll telephone from Wiggan; and Ackoutan is to sleep on the piazza. Good-morning, Miss Rayner."

He felt her eyes upon his in questioning gaze. He had just reached the door when the wireless indicated a message. The apparatus was in the den, and he hastily went to the receiver. Kenneth and Eleanor looked at each other in speechless questioning.

The uncanniness of it was still novel enough to be unusual; and the marvel of the little voice which could zig-zag through space, pathless and unguided, spoke its unintelligible language to them in impressive awe. Eleanor

rose and tiptoed out into the living-room. Churchill had hurriedly tossed his hat and khaki coat toward a chair as he dashed into the den, but he had failed in calculating the distance and they lay upon the floor instead.

Eleanor stooped and picked them up, and stood listening before putting them down on the chair. She became quite absorbed and altogether unconscious of holding them, as she followed with her mind the mysterious tick-tack. She continued to tiptoe on to the door of the den, and then stood looking in.

Churchill's back was toward her, and he was most intent upon the message. Finally it was told off and he wrote it in his ledger, then rising, turned. One lightning eye-flash revealed her, but this glance saw also that she was holding his hat and coat.

"Miss Rayner, that was a message from your father at Juneau."

"From Father?" she echoed. "What did he say?"

"'*Silvermere* slightly disabled. Delay of five days. Answer news.' Signature—J. K. Rayner."

They both remained silent, while he turned

back to the receiver, and after a moment or so, she asked, "What sort of an answer do you advise?"

Decent politeness compelled him to cease standing with his back toward her. How he wished she had remained in the other room. What was the sense of subjecting a man to so much unnecessary strain? Her beauty and nearness would create havoc in the breast of a statue; and how much more devastation in that of a man of his type, who for years had determinedly buried himself out of all possibility of such allurements? And the added unconventionality of having her here in his home, his hermitage, to be thrown together through a force of circumstances which seemed to combine to thwart his every intention and plan, in a most contrary way!

He found himself inwardly saying that if it were not so damned upsetting it would be ludicrous. He replied, in answer to her question:

"How will this do? 'Everything satisfactory here.

"'Signed

"'Churchill.'"

Her eyes assumed a thoughtful intentness

as they narrowed somewhat, in a gaze aslant to the floor. A moment of reflection, and then she looked up, saying:

"That will do nicely. I'll go and tell Kennie. He will want to hear the message from Father."

In some unaccountable manner, it grew dark when she left the room, although he was positive the sunshine was coming in at the window. He decided to get away now as speedily as possible, and did not go again into the boy's room. Grabbing up his coat and hat, and calling "good-by" from the door, he dashed out. They heard his horse outside, and then her receding hoof-beats on the road.

Eleanor having decided that Kenneth should be moved to the Hotel in Skagway where she could give him her attention and care, and also obviate the awkwardness of visiting him in the home of a strange man, was searching about in her mind for the most tactful statement to Kenneth of the plan. She, knowing Kenneth, anticipated the obstacles which he would erect, and rather dreaded the encounter.

His luncheon had been brought in by Antonio, who was now serving it on the daintiest china from a tray on a side table. After the

man left the room, she decided that possibly, as with all animals, the boy would prove more amenable after eating, and with the courage of the diver about to make a hazardous plunge, she started:

"Kennie dear, do you, er—do you like it here?"

"Bet-cher-life!" chewing vigorously.

"I'm very lonely at the hotel," in appealing tones, "and Father may be away a week yet; one never can tell, you know."

"Huh! That's a good one; you lonely! Ha, ha, ha, ho!"

Certainly boys were aggravating. She would try another lead.

"There are two stunning girls at the Hotel. They come on the *Spokane,* and will be in Skagway several days before taking the Yukon trip. It would be just dear for you to meet them."

"Sure thing. Trot 'em out with you tomorrow. I'm all in on that. Hi, Tony, bring another roll. What do the girls look like?" he asked at the next opportunity his mouth offered.

"Suppose you come and see. I will fetch the car for you, and you can be so much more

comfortable with me at the hotel than here, and——"

"Gee whiz! That's a good one. What do you think I am, any way? Give up this, for that bum joint? Well, now, just watch me!"

"Oh, Kenneth, shall you ever speak English?"

"As she is spoke? Nope." And a huge mouthful was safely disposed of.

"Besides you must realize that to remain here is like taking advantage of Mr. Churchill's kindness and hospitality."

"Advantage nothin'. He needs me in his business."

"I don't believe he wants strangers about."

"Sure thing, as far as you're concerned," sneered the boy, "for he hates girls and women, but I'm a different proposition," and in convincing tones which showed his mind firmly made up on this particular point, he added, "and I'm going to stay right here. Didn't he say I wasn't to get out of bed?"

Her foot tapped the floor. Surely he was adroit, and arranged that the punishment should not only fit the crime, but his own particular ends and wishes.

"Bully grub, isn't it?" he managed to ar-

ticulate, although an over-crowded mouth made the venture somewhat hazardous.

At this moment, Antonio appeared at the door, clad in spotless white duck, and announced that luncheon was served. As they passed through into the dining-room, her glance was attracted to an especially ferocious-looking revolver lying on a chair, as though hastily put there and forgotten. Its mounting was so gorgeous and elaborate that she leaned down, looking closer. As she did so, an inscription attracted her notice, and she read, "To Jack, as a token of appreciation for bravery in battle, from T. R." Of course, there were many T. R.'s in the world, no doubt, but there was *one* possessor of those initials who *had* been in battle!

So, as she ate the very dainty and delicious meal, she pondered many things.

The afternoon was spent in reading aloud to Kenneth and examining the many interesting objects and curios on walls or scattered about in the careless disorder of the hunter. When Hughes brought the horses around, Eleanor explained to Kenneth that she would not visit The Limit again; he was doing so nicely, and, unless he changed his mind and wished her to

come for him to go back with her to the hotel, he would not see her again until he was well enough to come by himself.

He said nothing, and giving her hand a good-by squeeze, half regretted the decision. As she went down the steps of the piazza, he called, "Good-by, El; don't forget a feller," muttering to himself, "She's a dippy looker, all right."

The remainder of the day and evening seemed lonesome and forlorn, and by night a 'phone came from Churchill at Wiggan, saying he would not return until late the next night. The intervening time dragged slowly, but the boy obeyed instructions, and remained in bed; later Antonio was persuaded to remove much of the bandage. The evening was gone, and it had grown late into the night of the second day, and yet Churchill had not returned. Kenneth, becoming restless, could not sleep, and called to Ackoutan, who was rolled in his blanket asleep on the piazza. The Indian with moccasined feet came silently to Kenneth's door, and stood, a huge figure of bronze:

"You call Ackoutan?"

"Yes. Come in. Why doesn't Mr. Churchill come back?"

"Ackoutan not know." Then after a pause he raised his head in deer-like fashion, listening, and long before the boy's sharp ears could hear any sound, the brave grunted, "Haida come now."

In a few moments the distant thud of clattering feet sounded their regular beat, growing louder in their approach, and louder, until their abrupt halt came sharp at the very foot of the steps. Churchill dashed in, calling, "Kenneth, old man, how are you?" He came at once to the boy's bed, and grasped the hands outstretched.

"All right, Jack, how are *you?*"

"Dead-beat tired. Here, Tony, something to eat, I'm starved; and then to bed. That means a night's rest for mine; I haven't indulged in so much reckless luxury since I went. Up all last night, working in the shaft."

"Gee, but I'm glad you're back! I've been too lonesome for pleasure."

Churchill was busy unbuckling leggings and boots, and slipping into easy togs. He looked up presently, saying:

"You had your cousin?"

"There's another guess coming to you, Jack," laughing.

"What do you mean?" giving Kenneth a look the boy considered sharper than necessary.

"She vamosed yesterday, and said she wouldn't return to our busy midst."

Churchill turned away rather impatiently, and went into the living-room. Certainly, the boy, he thought, could be annoying.

Tony was standing with his master's chair outdrawn, and Churchill sat down. He was ravenously hungry, everything tasted so good. It was fine to get back again, and as he ate, he looked about appreciatively at the familiar friends and objects of his household.

A certain light flashed into his eyes as they rested on the chair standing with its back to the window. She had sat there that morning, quizzing him.

But this last was treason; she must be absolutely stricken out of the picture, and as he lighted his pipe the steel of the gray eyes grew hard and resolute.

He rose, flecked a crumb from his khaki, and turned to his work.

On his desk lay the accumulated mail of two days; this he ran through hastily until at the very bottom of the pile rested a letter from Wentworth. It was long and newsy, and

asked many questions; but Churchill's reply, which he immediately wrote, proved a brief, forcible, protest, completely ignoring any other matter as worthy of consideration, and proceeded to the one vital point:

THE LIMIT, June 15th, —

DEAR DICK.—

Confound you!

Why couldn't you have given the facts? I never should have signed had I known the possibilities. He has brought his home out-fit, and then calmly leaves them on my hands while he sails away; primarily to settle matters at the Juneau mines, and incidentally to make repairs on his boat.

The girl is playing the deuce!

JACK.

Aurora Borealis,
Alaska.

All through the night he seemed to feel the touch of her hand as it had rested on his coat.

CHAPTER XII

A WEEK passed, and Churchill's working days being overlong and full, he noted only that in their passing she came no more to his shack.

Kenneth had now entirely recovered, an active, healthy young animal again, and still his guest at The Limit. Another wireless told of further delays and detentions preventing the return of the *Silvermere* at the time expected.

Kenneth daily 'phoned his cousin, keeping her posted of his convalescent progress, and of her father's change of plans. His vehement, explosive messages were punctuated with gee's and whizzes in his characteristic exclamatory style, as they went spinning over the wires in tumbled masses.

Churchill's name was not once mentioned by Eleanor, though the boy constantly dwelt upon his achievements. Her days were spent entirely out of doors, making trips on land and water with a group of enjoyable people from the hotel. With Hannah and Hughes in at-

tendance this queenly young woman traveled in a manner befitting her state.

Her father had left the launch for her use, and with it she was independent of the regular tourist steamboat service, so that during some time every day she had it out poking its nose in fiords and bays, encircling islands and pushing far into the cañons of primeval solitude.

On a certain wonderful evening the phenomenon of the aurora borealis trailed its fiery luminous brilliancy through the sky. With a party from the hotel, Eleanor's launch had been making an after-dinner spin, and was returning for the dance, when, just as it glided up to the dock, there appeared in the northern firmament those heralding flashes of light announcing the approach of the illumination.

Eleanor kept her place while the rest of the party, climbing over cushions and seats, were hurriedly jumping ashore, none of them having noticed the signals of the nearing spectacle. She could not bring herself to leave, while the evening beauty lingered upon the waters, and not wishing to dance, she gave the order to the captain to start off again.

As the boat shot away, those left behind

hurled shouts of protest to which she laughingly called back, "Good-by," adding, "not that I love you less, but this"—sweeping out her arms—"more."

"Cruel Lady of the Out-of-doors," called one, to the rapidly receding boat, "I warn you I shall pursue you with a flotilla and presently fetch you back, or follow you to the Pole, if necessary."

Her laugh rang out, and she answered with merry defiance,

"Once out here, I am dead to the world."

"Where to, Miss?" the captain asked, saluting.

"Across that bay over there, where that cleared spot is purple with flowers, or something that looks like heather. Does heather grow here, Captain?"

"I couldn't say, Miss."

"Well, let us go and see."

They were soon far out from the protecting shores of Skagway on the wide sweep of the waters running deep. It was nearer nine than eight o'clock, and the evening was luminous with the glow of the midnight sun's reflected brightness. The flare of phosphorescence came and went in weird fantastic shapes, and

lent an uncanny glare to the surface of the water.

Gradually there came stealing into the sky that other and stranger light. This crept along, as the current when first turned on in some vast electrical display diffuses through the atmosphere its tender glow. With tremulous waves the rosy pink vibrated and deepened into belts of blood-red color.

The launch seemed to cut through a sea of fire, and Eleanor sat breathlessly silent at these revelations of meteoric splendor.

"The Northern Lights, Miss!" exclaimed the captain. "Shall we make for that flat rock to the west there which runs out like a little peninsula? We can see from it in every direction, and I know there is enough depth to make a landing, as the channels run close in shore."

"Yes, yes, and be quick. I don't want to miss a ray," she urged excitedly, with heightened color and gleaming eyes. They ran swiftly across, and turning, came parallel with the flat projecting slab of granite, which overhung its base like a landing stage built out in deeper water. As they made fast, there could be seen on the opposite side of the point a long slender object, bobbing up and down on their

inshore wash. It proved to be an Indian birch-bark canoe of exquisite workmanship.

"Shall you go ashore, Miss?"

"Yes, I think we can get a better view from that ledge up there."

To make the climb, it was necessary to turn in behind the cliff for several yards to where the ascent was less sharp. As she rounded the corner, the soft odor of cigarette smoke came floating toward her, and looking up, there on a projecting shelf, some twenty feet above her, just rising to his feet, she saw Churchill.

He was bare-headed, and in hunting clothes. She stood smiling up at him for a moment, before gathering her skirts to make the climb, and said:

"You look like a discoverer claiming new territory in the name of your king. Quite a heroic picture, I assure you. May I share the spoils of conquest?"

He was reaching down to grasp her outstretched hand for the final upward steps, replying with smiling lips and eyes, although he was guarding himself against showing too forcibly the pleasure of his surprise.

"The spoils are not more than two feet

wide, but I think you can be quite comfortable sitting in this niche," and he guided her along the narrow shelf-like path. A murmured, "Pardon me," as his coat came off, and he spread it on the rock for her to sit on, a gallantry she silently noted.

"From indications," he explained, "I think the display will be especially fine. They are lighting up in great shape, these Polar electricians. If you notice, the mass of color is sweeping across the whole sky. Sometimes it appears in detached places only, and then there is not such a blaze of light."

"That quivering motion adds greatly to the effect, don't you think?" she asked. "As though it were hesitating to burst into flame before all the other rays of color were quite ready."

"The name given to those undulating rays is the 'Merry Dancers,'" he rejoined.

And as they watched them, the streamers of light ascended toward the zenith, rising from a dusky line of haze, a few degrees above the horizon. They stretched from the north to the east and west, forming a sparkling arc, whose extreme tips rested on the line where earth and sky met.

"What is the scientific explanation of the Aurora?" she asked, looking up.

"Electricity, pure and simple. Artificial electricity, when passed through rarefied air, exhibits a luminous stream which has all the characteristic appearance of the Aurora. So the meteorologists conclude that this natural phenomenon is produced by the passage of electricity through the upper regions of the atmosphere, although under conditions not yet understood."

"Listen! Don't you hear a soft rustling sound like the rubbing of silk or crushing of tissue paper? There, *that!*"

"Yes, I hear it. It is growing louder," he replied with fixed attention.

"What is it, do you suppose?" she asked breathlessly, straining forward.

"I don't know just how to explain that sound, and I have never heard it before on the several other occasions when I have witnessed the display of the Aurora, although I have read that it frequently accompanies it. It must be, I should imagine, the nearness of the contact of the rarefied air and the electricity."

"It seems uncanny," said the girl.

They sat in silence for a long time, each lost

in thought along different lines. Sweeping her eyes over the dome of the world, Eleanor exclaimed, "I have never seen anything so beautiful!"

And sweeping his eyes over her face he uttered in low burning tones, "Nor have I."

Then recollection tapped at his inner conscience, and reminded him of the *facts*.

He rose, and as she turned, raising her glance to his face, she noticed the hunted look upon it. It seemed to have grown gray and hard like granite.

The brilliancy was dying out of the sky, and the glow on peaks and crags growing dim, when she suddenly felt a foreboding chill of gloom. He had become silent, his mouth had serious, drawn lines about it, and she noticed that his right hand was clenched to a fist.

"Perhaps your friends will be getting anxious about you, Miss Rayner, and will be forming search parties and relief expeditions."

"Yes, they threatened to," she rejoined, as he helped her to rise, guiding her carefully along the narrow pathway to the place where they could descend. Here he swung himself below, and then reached to help her down, but she was too agile and sure-footed to need as-

sistance, and soon was standing on the level with the water. Here again, she caught sight of his canoe with his gun resting across the thwarts. She turned to him, saying:

"I will guarantee to tow your bark back safely and take you as—freight?"

"Thanks," he replied gravely, "I protest at the resemblance to a rescued shipwrecked mariner."

"But I offer you my modern rapid transit, and you cling to your obsolete method of transportation! Surely progress is not yet in Alaska."

And she walked on toward the launch.

"Perhaps, for all you know, I may have a secret submarine tube, like the McAdoo tunnel, where I and my canoe are shot by electric current direct to The Limit."

It was discourteous, he thought, not to enter into her effort to lighten the strain of the situation, even though his heart was heavy and hopeless.

"I shall probably linger in these woods till midnight, renewing acquaintance with some of the 'Wild Animals I Have Met.'"

His tone was serious and lacked the play his words conveyed as he walked with her to the

boat and assisted her over the side. He had the appearance of a man who has realized in some struggle or fight which faced him that the odds were against him.

As the launch shot away she called, "I shall name this the night of the 'Merry Dancers'; good-night."

He turned resolutely, and taking his gun from the canoe, she saw him round the corner of the granite bluff and disappear into the blackness of the forest.

The ride back to Skagway over the still glowing water, into whose depths at another time Eleanor would have gazed spell-bound, seemed now a chill, dull affair, and she sought a reason for his sudden change of tone and manner.

As she pondered, she was dismayed at the discovery of a strange difference in herself; a subtle sensation which crept through her at the insistent appearance of his personality before her mental consciousness. Even in his absence, this was more compelling than she wished to admit.

It must not be. He had shown her no attention; in fact, had noticeably avoided her, and even to-night had accentuated his indiffer-

ence by sending her home about her business, refusing the opportunity to become her escort.

Her breath came rather faster, and her eyes flashed indignantly at the recollection of the slight. This was a new experience! She determined there should be no chance of its repetition.

The next morning, Kenneth and Ackoutan on horseback, came dashing into Skagway, his visit with Churchill at an end.

He brought a message from his uncle which said that he would arrive by three o'clock that afternoon. At all of this Eleanor silently rejoiced.

CHAPTER XIII

On the day following the Aurora display, when Eleanor went to her rooms after luncheon, she found Hannah half in and half out of trunks and boxes, surrounded by piles of tissue paper, that were intended to give to Eleanor's gowns the well-filled proportions of her own rounded lines.

"It will be comfy, Hannah, to get back to our quarters on the *Silvermere*."

"Indeed, Miss, so it will. I was surprised, Miss, at your Pa taking the boat away from you." Hannah with outraged dignity exercised the latitude she considered her prerogative as an old family servant.

The *Silvermere* was due in less than an hour. In the midst of their hurry and packing, there was a knock at the door and Kenneth sprang into the room, landing in the middle of chiffons and frilly things.

"Whew! I feel like the ballet at the Metropolitan. You seem to be fixing up your fences. Well, you're just in time. You'll

need all your négligées, décolletées,—which is it, El? Those full-dress undress basques you wear *off* your shoulders?"

"Have you ever been trained to knock at a lady's door? Your manners are savage!" reprimanded the girl with freezing dignity.

"Sure; I learned *that* in the catechism. But listen; my beloved sister is down the bay with the *Silvermere* as escort."

"What do you mean?" asked Eleanor with perplexity.

The boy did a double shuffle toward the window, whistling "Tickled to Death," and pulling aside the curtain, exclaimed:

"Gaze through this aperture, called a window, and you will behold her modest ocean greyhound which she has ballasted with the Smart Set of the Greater City riding gracefully upon the wavelets."

Eleanor rushed to the window and there, pulling out from the vessel's side, was the launch. Only a ship's length behind it, steaming slowly, came the dainty *Silvermere*.

"Father, too!" she cried. "Come, let us hurry!" and snatching up her parasol, she hastened quickly to the landing.

The commotion downstairs in the hotel of-

fice showed plainly that news of the yachts' coming already had been pretty freely circulated. Office clerks and bell boys came from their posts and were peering through windows and doors, and the guests were bunching in little groups talking with suppressed excitement.

The people on the streets were stopping and asking questions of each other. Some of them thought the larger vessel was a United States naval ship; and one man declared it was the *Hohenzollern* with Prince Henry on board. Idlers were making for the wharf, and a considerable crowd had assembled when the launch glided alongside.

Eleanor and Ken were already waiting, and had waved their greetings to Mrs. Loring and Mr. Rayner who were seated in the stern.

As the boat touched the landing stage, Kenneth jumped aboard, exclaiming:

"Well, I'll be blowed, Uncle Jim! Where did you pick Con up?" He had by this time given his sister a resounding kiss, and had turned to assist Eleanor aboard.

"It just happened that incidentally she picked me up. Primarily she picked up my wireless, which was sent to you just off Ju-

neau, where she happened to be lurking about in a stealthy manner."

Mrs. Loring was quietly laughing and greatly enjoying Eleanor's and Kenneth's consternation. The orders to reverse the engine and back off were given, and the launch headed for the *Yukon.*

Eleanor had thrown her arms about her father's neck with a tight squeeze, and she said as she kissed him, "Oh, the bad Daddie! To stay away so long!" Then turning to her cousin, she added, "This is a delightful surprise, Connie dear. How did you come to do it?"

"Uncle Jim's wireless to you people here simply threw us off our course, and instead of Japan, lo! it is Alaska."

"Oh, what a bluff!" said Kenneth. "She was headed here from the start, all right, I'll bet a nickel."

"I had to come and see what Uncle Jim was up to. You know I consider that he needs watching."

"You see, I'm not free to go unmolested anywhere, not even on the high seas. But some fine day she will get what's coming to

her. We'll meet in the arena," and Mr. Rayner shook his finger at her warningly.

"Oh, that doesn't frighten me," she returned with easy nonchalance. "We have met there already, and I've stolen your weapons."

Here Kenneth showed signs of impatience, saying:

"Don't talk shop. What's your freight, Con?"

She looked at him with puzzled question, slowly repeating, "What's my freight? What do you mean?"

"Oh, you know. Who's your ship's company? A pack of silly girls, I'll bet a nickel."

"Well, you've lost your nickel. Your mother's one of my ship's company."

"Gee whiz! Mother? Bully! Who else?"

"Well, if you keep jumping about like that you'll either go overboard or upset the boat. Sit down and be still."

"Thanks. Keep the change," he replied with an air of munificence.

"Oh, you incorrigible creature! There should be a law enacted making slang criminal."

"Never mind. Tell us whom you have fetched, Connie?" urged Eleanor.

"The Wickhams, the Frasers," (Kenneth was making frightful faces) "Archie Gilfillan, the Schuylers——"

"Victor Schuyler? Hooray!" interrupted Ken.

"And the Talbots," resumed Mrs. Loring, "and ourselves."

"Pauline Talbot," repeated Eleanor with interest. "Oh, splendid! Well, now that you have got them here, what are you going to do with them?"

"Do with them? Show them their own country; it is about time. I felt rather sorry for you, Eleanor, and couldn't imagine how you were going to pass the time up here in this wilderness, or what you could find to interest you,—with Uncle Jim traipsing about with oily superintendents and mining engineers, and I fancied you would be having a drab time of it."

"No, indeed, no. I have been enjoying myself hugely," and turning to her father, she said, "The Stanley Benedicts are here, Daddie."

"At the hotel? Well, by Jove! We must

send for their luggage and have them with us."

The launch was made fast to the landing stage, and lined up along the rail of the vessel, waving and shouting greetings, were the invaders.

"Hello, Ken!" from Victor Schuyler, who was half-way down the stairs.

"How d'do, Miss Rayner," from Archie Gilfillan and Bertie Talbot as they scrambled down after Victor. "Makes a fellow feel like an Arctic explorer,—this," and Bertie swept out his hand toward the snow mountains and glaciers.

In a few minutes they were all on deck shaking hands and talking at once, everybody exchanging stories of their experiences of the trip.

Eleanor and Kenneth were already assuming the importance of old settlers and imparting more or less authentic information, geographically and geologically; and what Kenneth did not actually feel sure of in the line of statistics, his imagination more than made good. When he got to Churchill and his wonderful bungalow, superlatives flew until Victor Schuyler, Kenneth's schoolmate, could

stand it no longer, and made no secret of his skepticism and unbelief, as he exploded impatiently, "Oh, rot! He must be a freak; I don't want to know him!"

The party in little groups strolled about the deck, looking with keen new interest at the scene of strange wild nature spread all about them.

Skagway, in its wooden architecture, lay flat with the water, at the base of towering masses of rock; back of this rose mountains piled higher and higher, receding back one behind the other. On many of them, the snow lay far down their sides; on others, whose bare granite faces were deeply lined, the snow had remained in their fissures and, being sheltered from the sun, had formed strange characters and letters penciled in white against the black rock.

Owing to the great rise and fall of the tide, Skagway is approached from the harbor by long planked bridges raised on piles.

The Lynn Canal stretches its long sinuous arm deep into the mainland, which it has indented and notched until its margin looks like fringe and these crooked waterways like the knotted fingers of a distorted

hand. Its shore line in most places rises in perpendicular walls to immense height,—an impregnable front which defies assault and proclaims itself invincible.

Upon getting the news of the arrival of the *Yukon* off Skagway, Churchill's consternation was too great for comfort. His agents had rented the yacht for a Japanese trip, stipulating that Mrs. Loring must ship her own crew, with the single exception of Captain Saunders, who had received instructions not to recognize Churchill, who, as John Alexander, the owner, was traveling abroad.

With the discovery that Eleanor's presence here was likely to become for him a dangerous happiness, Churchill determined to be in evidence as little as possible. His work would prove an easy excuse, aided by the daily busy rush of sight-seeing which would absorb the time and attention of the tourists. He reflected there would be but few occasions, if any, on which he would meet her, and as the time of her sojourn would speedily pass, she would sail away, unaware that to him her coming had been as a golden flood of sunshine into the gloom of a prisoner's cell.

CHAPTER XIV

Of course the absorbing subject first in importance before all others was the topic of the mines.

A visit to the Aurora Borealis and the Polar Star must be the first on the list of points of interest; the "opening grand march," as Mr. Bertie Talbot expressed it.

But the problem which threatened to become serious and cause confusion in the ranks of the invaders was that of daytime and nighttime. One couldn't say daylight and dark, because, as Mrs. Frazier wailed, "Without some sign and with such persistent sunlight, one cannot be expected to determine A. M. from P. M. To be sure, there are the clocks, but when they point to ten o'clock, pray how is one to know which ten o'clock they indicate? And," she further declared as a warning, "none of you people must be surprised to see me wearing a low gown at breakfast or a shirt-waist and stiff collar at dinner."

It was decided to make the tour of inspec-

tion the day after the arrival, and Mr. Rayner telephoned from the hotel in Skagway to Churchill to expect them then.

The automobiles were waiting at the end of the long dock, when everybody from the yachts landed, and Churchill stood by his own touring car, ready to receive them.

While the small boats were approaching the landing stage, a crowd of interested spectators stood about, eyeing with curiosity the disembarking of the party.

Mrs. Frazer confessed to a consuming desire to see Kenneth's "freak engineer," as Victor called him, and requested Mr. Rayner to introduce him to her first, saying:

"Show me this paragon, who, being a New York man, a college graduate, born and bred a gentleman and reputed rich, chooses to live as a hermit, work like a laborer, dig mines, set up machinery and get oily and greasy."

As they reached the street, Churchill came forward, clad from cap to boots in a chauffeur's suit of black leather.

"Gracious!" she murmured to her husband under her breath, "magnificent—a great black giant!"

Mr. Rayner presented him to all, and after

a few moments' standing about and chatting, everybody was assigned to a place in the cars, Churchill taking Mrs. Loring on the front seat beside him.

Eleanor had chosen to ride, and Bertie Talbot begged the privilege of taking Hughes's place, so that Twostep and the Merry Widow were gleaming in their satin coats, standing ready. She decided to take a different route from that of the cars out to the mines, going by the trail, through the Indian villages and returning by the other road through Hale's to the Aurora Borealis, where they would join the cars later. Beyond a nod and a smile of greeting, she and Churchill did not meet. They had not seen each other since the night on the rock.

It was arranged that the auto parties should see the Aurora Borealis first, then proceed to the Polar Star by the railway which Churchill had built, connecting the two mines with the White Pass and Yukon Route.

A raised platform had been constructed at each end of the line, with steps to mount to a level with the ore-cars and then more steps down to the floor of the cars.

As the party took their seats, Mrs. Schuyler

laughingly protested to Churchill that boards quite destroyed the illusion. He should have allowed the yellow metal to remain for them to sit on, in order that they might feel quite golden and sumptuous.

"I feel like a gilt-edged security," purred Bertie Talbot contentedly.

Upon their return to Aurora, Antonio was prepared to serve a buffet luncheon on the piazza of The Limit.

The marvelous view and outlook from all points held their attention, and they stood absorbed for many moments in silence.

"Aren't you ever afraid of the whole thing blowing off into space, Mr. Churchill?" asked Mrs. Wickham.

"We are well anchored with chains and cables, and the foundation is cemented into the crevices and fissures of the rock deep down. If you will venture with me out on the edge, I shall prove to you that I have come to stay," he replied laughing.

They moved about, inspecting everything, and strolled into the snug interior, where with interest and keen pleasure they examined the collection of Indian curios and Churchill's hunting trophies. Over the secretary, hung

a photograph of a sledge-and-dog team, with two figures standing in the snow. Of the two men clothed like Polar bears, having little distinguishable about them but eyes and nose to prove them human animals, one was Churchill. The scene was the wilds of the Far North, and hummocks of ice and frozen snow were piled in masses about. Mrs. Loring had called Pauline Talbot and they both were bending over it for a closer scrutiny when Mrs. Wickham and Churchill reëntered the bungalow.

"Where was this taken, Mr. Churchill?" asked Consuelo. "And who is the other—— animal?"

"We were at Point Barrow, and the other beast is my Indian, Ackoutan. I made the trip early this spring, Mr. Rayner," turning toward his chief, "prospecting mostly, with, however, a percentage of adventure." While he was speaking he raised the lid of a locker seat, and taking from its interior several pieces of ore, passed them around for inspection. Some were of copper; many of gold, and among them were black pieces that they knew to be coal. "These," indicating the last, "I found at Cape Lisburne on the shore of the Arctic Ocean near the Corwin Coal

Mine, but not on its territory, showing that the product is plentiful. Alaska has an embarrassment of riches. When Mr. Rayner has taken out all of the gold, he can go into the coal business."

"What's the matter with the ice business?" asked Victor Schuyler.

Churchill went to the door and summoning Antonio, gave him some instructions.

A few moments later the confusion of barking and yelping and jumping dogs was heard outside, and through the open door there came, scrambling and leaping, a jostling herd of four shaggy-coated wolf-like creatures all leashed together in the iron grasp of Ackoutan. At Churchill's command they instantly halted and fell flat upon the floor with their noses between their front paws. Then as each was called by his name, he sat up in most attentive attitude, and gave one quick, short little bark, not too sharp or loud.

"Your children are very well behaved, Mr. Churchill," complimented Mrs. Fraser.

"In this case the old proverb, which claims that looks are not in it for a minute with behavior, fits the Esquimaux dog perfectly," said their master, "Never once did they fail

to report for duty throughout the entire trip, nor fall short in the performance of it. The pictures of these four dogs are those leaders there in the photo, Mrs. Loring, and certainly no one could accuse them of having the slightest claim to beauty."

"Well, I take off my hat, just the same, to them," said Archie Gilfillan.

The dogs had not yet stirred, keeping their eyes fixed on Churchill's face. The towering form just outside the door stood equally immovable. Presently Churchill said something in Indian to the statue, which gave a low guttural answer, followed by a soft whoop or whistle to the dogs. They were instantly on their feet, and with a sharp wheel went leaping and tumbling off the piazza.

Just then the telephone bell rang. Antonio appeared with his most rigid manner, and asked that Mr. Rayner go to the 'phone.

The message was from Talbot, saying that Miss Eleanor had changed her mind, and that they would not stop at The Limit, but would return to Skagway by the same trail.

This was the signal for departure, and in a short time the motor cars were on their way back to Skagway. With the first week of sight-seeing in and around Skagway at an

end, followed the arrangements for the more important trip down the Yukon River from White Horse to Dawson City.

Mr. Rayner urged Churchill to join them, to which Mrs. Loring added her cordial invitation. But his refusal was prompt and firm.

Kenneth had managed so well to obtain an invitation to remain behind with Churchill at The Limit that he flattered himself he was not suspected of having been self-invited.

Wentworth was at Juneau. He had written Churchill that Mr. Rayner while there had sent for him in haste to leave New York at once and proceed there with all possible speed, to apply the law to some of the malcontents. He added: "He urges that I go on to Skagway when matters here are quiet and go down the Yukon River with the party. I don't give a hang for the Yukon River, he doesn't have to offer that as an inducement, and if I decide to accept, it will be for two reasons which have nothing to do with that noble waterway. I am confident of your welcome, but can I be sure of even a look of approval from her? Confound Cecil Loring!

"Yours,

"Dick.

"Am taking my chances: Leave to-night."

CHAPTER XV

KENNETH, in a state of ecstatic bliss, was kicking his heels with delight because he had actually arrived for a visit with his hero.

His Greek god was nowhere about, but that did not matter, he reflected. He would show up for "grub," and in the meantime the anticipation of all this joy for a whole week could soak through and through till he dripped happiness.

"What a relief to be rid of the girls! And all the fuss! 'Such a bunch of ginks' as Con toted about! Well, women were the deuce. Past all understanding! Chatter! Gabble,—such rot! And a whole week with Jack! Whew! He's a rum one. Never says a word about himself, but I'll make him talk! What a bully gun! That's a new one. What did he get that for? With a room full knocking about. I hear him. Gosh!" and the boy dashed out, all excitement. "Hi, there, J!" shouted he, as Churchill dismounted.

Churchill's face was alight, his teeth gleaming in a smiling welcome.

"I got here first, and have been nosing about among your guns. What's the new one for?" asked the boy.

They were on the veranda steps, and Churchill clanked up with dusty boots and spurs and his wind-blown hair tossed in disorder.

"Oh, I got that for shooting Indians," laughed Churchill.

"Let me go with you, Jack? When do you start? My, but you are black! Where have you been?"

"Out Hale's way. I am going to Lake Bennett Thursday, so be ready. We shall take the train from Skagway to White Horse."

"Gosh! but that's dippy!" and Kenneth's eyes snapped. "Didn't I have an escape, though? Suppose you hadn't asked me to come to your joint? I should have been doin' the polite to that bunch of girls of Con's." And the beads of agony actually stood on the boy's brow.

Churchill threw back his head and roared.

"Well, old fellow, we are well out of that!"

and he proceeded to take off his spurs and leggings.

"When did they get away?" asked the elder man as he stretched himself in the hammock.

"This morning early. At the last minute Eleanor wanted me to change my mind,—but not for mine! Dawson's all right, but I'd rather be here with you. Say, can't we make things hum—you and me?"

"What's that? You and ——?" laughed Churchill. "And you a candidate for Columbia," as his eyes widened in consternation and mock horror.

"Now don't you be a rum one and pull me up as El does. Gee whiz! She never gives a feller any line! I say, but when's grub ready?"

"Push that button, and order what you want."

"Tony," as that perfected piece of domestic machinery answered the signal, "this young man wants something to eat and drink in a hurry."

Tony's ivories glistened as he touched his finger to his forehead, and backed out.

"Gosh! But such a load of squawking

freaks! That engine refused to start, and I didn't blame the blasted thing. They filled the whole darned train. Fancy, a pack of women piking off to Dawson with trunks and trunks of Newport clothes! Con and El told 'em not to, but gosh, they just got to be 'done up' every day with Royal Hair Rejuvenator and Facial Massage. Such a flock of geese! Lord! but I'm glad to be here! If it hadn't been for Mr. Dick, there would have been nothin' doin' for me. Con and El everlastingly saying I must be trained in 'social usages,' and 'polite attentions to women.' I'd like to pack 'em all in the launch and run her on the rocks, honest!"

"I think your animosity is getting the upper hand. Here, perhaps this will change your mental attitude. A full stomach is conducive to good nature," said Churchill, as Tony with a tray laden to the breaking point proceeded to set out the temptations before which Ken had no power of resistance. "Why are you so antagonistic, Ken?"

"Well, why on earth did Con want to bring that boat-load of curiosities? We were just right before she came. Just a nice little party. Uncle Jim and El and you and me.

No fuss, nor anything. El's a good fellow all right. So is Con, by herself. But with that menagerie! Great Scott! And she says they 'amuse' her! I don't think El cared a bit about going. Uncle Jim expected Lord Rosthwaite on the *Spokane,* but he wired he couldn't get away. Guess that's what has upset El."

Churchill sat rather still. He asked no question, but after a little, said:

"Be ready Thursday morning to start for Lake Bennett. The train leaves Skagway at 9:30. Take togs for fishing and hunting. Tony will put up the larder and Akoutan the traps and outfit."

"Jack, but that's ripping! Where do we stop? In a tent? And what do we shoot?"

"There's a good camp there, and almost everything in big game."

"How long shall we be there?" and the boy's interest and eagerness were boundless.

"A week."

"Won't the bunch think you've been lying about not being able to get away?" with a sly, quizzical wink.

Churchill laughed quietly as he bent down to fix a buckle on his legging.

"Did you ever hear two women bet?"

Churchill looked up with a puzzled smile at this irrelevancy.

"What do you mean, boy?"

"Con and El were betting the other day, and it was the best all-fired fun! You'd just ought to have heard 'em!"

"I should have been charmed! But, Ken, don't you think you had better train down some of those expressions of yours?"

"Confine myself to the language of Addison and Steele and Burke's Conciliation Speech, I suppose. Not for mine. And they were betting about you."

Churchill's face sobered, as he looked up; —"About me?"

"Yes. Con bet you and Mr. Dick had known each other all your lives; and El bet you hadn't. I told them I'd hold the stakes and find out. This made El mad, and she said she'd swat me. No, she didn't say that, but that's what she *looked.*"

Churchill's face paled a little. "Here, when you have had enough to eat, try on these boots. You will need them when we get into camp."

"But they're yours, Jack."

"I have more. Did you bring a leather jacket?"

"No."

"Well, what *did* you bring? A dinner coat for hunting in the interior of Alaska? Looks as if you didn't realize what we savages wear." Churchill ransacked the boy's suit-case, condemning and handling its contents much as a Customs officer might.

"I can go back to the *Silvermere* to-morrow and rig up. But you didn't tell a feller. How was I to know?" and the boy felt he must retrieve himself some way in his hero's eyes.

"I think we can find enough here to go round, old chap. But I shall take the car into Skagway to-morrow. I want a compass of mine Banks has on the *Silvermere*. I am going to send a wireless now to Banks to meet us with the launch."

"Gosh! Let's see you do it." And the boy dashed after Churchill. "Jack, where did you learn it?"

"At a station on the Pacific," laconically.

"Teach me?"

"Yes. Come on," and he led the way into his den, where the apparatus was rigged.

Kenneth watched with interest and gazed in silence at the marvelous magic of it.

"Now then, did you catch on?" Churchill asked as he finished.

"No, b'gosh; how could I?"

"Come, we will ride out toward the railroad. I want to look over a bit of trestle. Did you know that road was begun May 28, 1898, and finished July 29, 1900,—a wonderful piece of engineering and construction,—one of the greatest of the last century? It was necessary for the men to be suspended by ropes while cutting the grade and making the road-bed, the mountain sides are so steep. The cost was enormous; the first twenty miles out of Skagway cost $2,000,000.

"Gee whiz! that is at the rate of $100,000 a mile," exclaimed the boy.

"Yes, and on the shore of Lake Bennett, in spots, it was even more costly. At a place about seven miles out of Skagway, called Rocky Point, the train runs along a shelf at a dizzy height, which is blasted out of a perpendicular wall of rock. Looking back from that point there is a wonderful view of Skagway and the Lynn Canal; and from just beyond the hanging rocks at Clifton and Pitch-

fork Falls, can be seen the old White Pass Trail, over which thousands of hopeful prospectors toiled on their way to the diggings. It took these poor pilgrims weeks for their tedious and exhausting journey."

"I just can't wait till Thursday," and Ken jammed his hands in his pockets and went dancing about and whistling in a crazy manner.

"Say, Jack, I heard Cousin Eleanor telling Mrs. Schuyler that she intended coming here every summer; is going to build, and all that; she can do it, too. Her place in the Berkshires is a peach, and she drew the plans herself for the whole lay-out. She said Europe wasn't in it for a minute with the Northwest."

After a silence in which Churchill's heart did some quick work, the lad's meandering talk flowed on without any evidence that the older man heeded or even heard.

"And Con says El could have been a duchess in any court abroad. I bet she'll end up by marrying some cracker-jack of a cowboy or a Siwash chief."

Ackoutan now appeared, bringing Haida and Kooska.

"Are you ready?" Churchill asked, and

stalked out. He realized he would have to do the talking himself if he wanted to keep down the boy's chatter. To have her constantly shoved in front of his eyes when he was struggling so hard to shut out the entrancing vision, and tear out the longing to dwell on her glorious beauty and sweet personality, was a greater task than any he had yet performed.

They rode away; and on toward ten o'clock returned to tumble in for a good sleep.

The next morning they were up and off early. The launch was awaiting them at the dock, and Banks ready, but with excuses that the compass could not be found. So they started for a search on the *Silvermere*. Upon one occasion with Mr. Rayner, Churchill had been over most of the boat save that portion which contained Eleanor's apartments. He had never seen them, but as they went through the passage from the main saloon aft, the doors were open into her stateroom and boudoir beyond. Ken turned in with easy nonchalance, quite a privileged trespasser.

"Well, I'll be blowed! Here's your compass, Jack, on El's dressing table. She swiped it, I'll bet."

Churchill paused on the threshold, and his hat came off with a jerk; but he made no move to enter.

"Come on in," shouted the boy.

The man shook his head.

"Hi, there! Why don't you come in?" demanded Kenneth impatiently.

"I am not going in," and his face was stern. "Put that back where you found it. I am not going to take it now."

"Not going to take it? Why?" said the boy, looking puzzled.

"Simply because I intend leaving it where you found it. Your cousin evidently had some reason for placing it there, and she shall find it where she left it."

"What a chump, ha, ha, ha. You're a jay, all right!" and he brought the compass over to the door. "Say, but it's a corker! Gold, with J. C. in diamonds. Gosh!" and he drew in his breath in a low whistle of admiration.

"Put that back, I say; and in the exact place that you found it!" The voice had a ring which caused the boy to look up in incredulous wonderment.

Churchill turned away and ascended to the deck. Kenneth followed on, thoroughly mys-

tified, and inwardly commenting upon the sudden wrath of his Greek god.

Churchill explained to Banks only what he considered necessary for him to know, and then hurried to the launch.

On reaching Skagway he bought a compass at the ships' supplies store. Kenneth was all curiosity. When he saw Churchill count out eighty-five dollars his eyes fairly bulged, and he asked breathlessly: "Do they cost like that?"

"No, not all. I can get one for eighty-five cents; but that style is not what I want. See here, Kenneth." The boy looked up quickly, almost alarmed. There seemed an ominous ring of approaching reproof in the stern voice.

"Keep perfectly quiet about this compass business. Don't mention the circumstance to your cousin; do you understand?"

"Well, don't you think she should know that we know that she swiped it?"

Churchill looked a reprimand, but it was impossible to maintain any austerity. The boy was such a handsome, reckless, dashing good fellow, and the merriment fairly oozed from every bit of him, so that Jack's dignity

melted and ran away, and he was forced to laugh too!

"Miss Eleanor evidently had some plan in regard to the compass. Perhaps she found it lying about on the yacht and put it away for safe keeping, and then forgot it in getting ready for the Dawson trip."

Kenneth rolled his eyes in doubt.

"That's a fishy story, all right!"

"Jump in. We're all aboard now," and the machine started. They arrived at the shack just in time for a delicious supper, served and ready on the piazza.

CHAPTER XVI

As the train from White Horse pulled into the station at Skagway, Churchill dismounted from Haida at the Bank of Alaska, where he was to meet Mr. Rayner, according to wired instructions from Atlin; while the others of the party went at once to the yachts.

"Certainly a fine trip, Churchill, and well worth while," Mr. Rayner admitted in reply to Churchill's inquiries as they shook hands.

"That is a great piece of railroad, that White Pass and Yukon Route. All credit is due those fellows who pushed that enterprise. I'm glad to get back, though; nothing like one's own bathtub, I find, after all."

"But the accommodations are quite up to date, don't you think?"

"Yes, oh, yes, I suppose they are," admitted Mr. Rayner with reservations. "In fact, I know they are. Really it's wonderful what these fellows have accomplished—these pioneers and developers of the new cities up here. I'm just an old conservative when it amounts to comfort, and snuggle up to Broadway. The women went crazy over the flowers on the

river banks and wanted me to bribe the captain to stop the boat every little while, to let them go ashore and pick them, especially that fire weed. What a remarkably brilliant bloom it is."

"Did you get any good sport at Caribou and Atlin?"

"Well, no, I didn't, but the kids did. They did very well, too. Bertie Talbot declared 'the big game and fish just stood about and swam around waiting to be destroyed, and crawled away insulted if they were not.' And now, how are things with you? You should have been with us; there is no reason whatever that you should sacrifice everything for work, and I'll not permit it. You are to go on the Glacier trip, do you get that? I want to see you to-night, and so does Mrs. Loring. I shall be on the *Yukon* for dinner."

They talked for a few minutes entirely of business, and Mr. Rayner concluded by saying, "Send Kenneth to the *Silvermere* at once. You must need a rest, after a week with that nerve-racking monkey."

"You're wrong. We have had a fine week. I was not working so hard as you think, for I took him out to my camp on Lake Bennett,

and he bagged a bear, two foxes and a raccoon; fine skins, all of them. He is down at the wharf now, bursting with the news. He wanted to telephone you at Atlin," laughing, "and I don't think he has eaten anything but bear steaks since Thursday."

At the Post Office Churchill found a note from Mrs. Loring, asking him to dine on the *Yukon* most informally that evening; reminding him she wished to talk over with him the details and plans for the Muir Glacier expedition.

He had not seen Eleanor nor heard her voice since the night of the "Merry Dancers," except the fleeting nod that she had thrown him the day they all went out to the mines.

Mrs. Loring's invitation lay in his hand. It meant that he could see her, talk with her, be near her that very evening. The temptation was so alluring! Should he yield? Surely he could permit himself that much latitude. He tried to justify himself into accepting the invitation out of purely disinterested consideration for Mrs. Loring's wishes. To do so, would mean no risk to any but his own feelings and peace of mind. Ah, but would it? Could he be sure of just that?

The paper crumpled as he crushed it tightly in his hand. Then he deliberately tore it in fine pieces, and Kenneth would have seen again the same determined look on Churchill's face that it wore when he refused to enter his cousin's apartments on the *Silvermere.*

He left the Post Office and remounting Haida rode away. He did not continue on the road to The Limit, but turned into the Kasa-an Trail, and unconscious of time, rode late into the afternoon, before recollecting that his presence at the Polar Star was urgent.

He had been called up before starting for Skagway, and asked to be there sometime during the day.

Suddenly, as he made a sharp turn in the trail, he saw Eleanor ahead on Twostep not fifty feet away. She must have heard Haida's hoof-beats, for she turned in the saddle, and seeing him, reined in and stood waiting.

No escape! No excuse!

As he rode up, she said:

"Isn't this a day! Twostep and I are exploring. I just couldn't remain on that yacht, with all this lying about, out-of-doors," and she made a sweeping gesture.

"I should think you would be tired after the journey," he replied.

"Oh, I am never tired, at least not in *that* way. I could travel continuously for months."

"I don't see Hughes," Churchill said, looking about, "but I conclude he must be at least within half a mile, in some direction. Where is he?"

"Hughes?" she repeated with a tantalizing drawl, looking this way and that in a searching manner, "Why, Hughes is where he should be —in Skagway attending to the transfer of the trunks and boxes from the railway station to the yachts."

Churchill's face hardened, and the bronze showed a flush through.

"Evidently, you didn't attach much importance to the warning, which even your thoughtless cousin saw the reason of. A girl riding about these wilds alone is not only reckless, but foolish. Did your father know you rode out without Hughes?" Churchill demanded almost sternly.

"Father didn't know I rode out. Why should he, pray? I am not in the habit of asking his consent to ride?"

"I can well understand that for Central

Park, or Newport, or Tuxedo. But the heart of Alaska's mining district is another proposition, and I want to caution you against it. Believe me, it is most unwise."

She looked rarely fine with the glow of perfect health and spirits showing in every line of her strong young figure, so fresh and clean-cut, in her close habit.

She felt the intentness of his gaze, but his words had made her a trifle combative.

"I really think, Mr. Churchill, you are an alarmist. I feel like putting your caution to the test."

There was a slightly perceptible tightening of his lips, and his eyes narrowed as he looked away. But he said nothing. Their horses were going along at an easy walk, and were now within two hundred feet of Hale's.

"I shall have work to keep me busy here for at least two hours. You had better rest awhile at Mrs. Hale's and when you are ready to return, Ackoutan can take you back. He is here."

After this they rode on in silence for a short distance. She noted his straight, firm seat in the saddle, his shoulders so strong and square. He reminded her of the cavalry-men

in Squadron A, at their annual drill in Madison Square Garden, save that they did not wear buck-skin, silver spurs and spotless white flannel shirts.

It was impossible to keep down the smile from her eyes. His decided and fatherly manner and the way he disposed of her proved convulsing. Certainly he was a different type of man from any she had ever met. The contrast was ludicrous! And the experience was so unique she could not easily adjust it to herself. Without being conceited she had grown so accustomed to almost abject attentions and devotion from the men she knew, that to be emphatically and firmly told "to go now, and sit in the corner like a good little girl until your nurse comes to fetch you," was inconceivable, and too excruciatingly funny!

They were now there. Churchill had thrown himself from his horse, and handed the reins to Ackoutan, who had run out as they came up. He came round to help her dismount, but she was busy with her glove, and kept him standing there purposely.

At last he looked up, and met her smiling eyes and radiant face. The situation was irresistible, and she burst into a merry peal of

hearty laughter, in which he was forced to join.

"But just suppose I choose either to wait and return with you, or go back alone?"

She had trapped him! She knew he would never permit her to go alone, and he could not with courtesy insist upon Ackoutan. She was rather shocked at her audacity in resorting to strategy to secure his escort. She had hardly meant it that way. He stood awaiting her pleasure to dismount. He might have been a groom, his face was so expressionless. She thought he could not have heard, and she repeated her remark. He looked straight into her eyes as he replied:

"It is just as you decide. Of course, if you prefer not to have Ackoutan take you back, then I shall do so," and his arms were holding her as she half slid, half jumped to the ground. A strange thrill seemed to surge through her at his touch, and she felt her breath come quickly.

They were walking now towards Mrs. Hale's shack, and Eleanor said she would wait there, and get Mrs. Hale to relate some of her Indian stories, of the pioneer days when Mrs. Tom was a great lady. She talked rather

fast. She avoided returning to any further personalities.

At the cabin door, he only said hurriedly, without looking at her again, that when his work was finished Ackoutan would fetch Twostep to her, and she was to mount and ride on to the "Emporium," where he would meet her. Then he was gone.

Mrs. Hale came hurrying out from the lean-to, and welcomed Eleanor with pleased homage, saying, "It is an honor to be remembered by the elegant young lady."

The best tea-cups were brought out, and as she bustled about brewing the tea and putting a generous plate of cookies on the table, they chatted away in cosy fashion. Mrs. Hale told the girl of the early days when trapping and hunting were thrilling experiences. John Hale had handled every kind of pelt the furriers could sell, and the trading post was a noted one. Mrs. Hale's quaint telling of her husband's hair-breadth escapes from wild animals and wild men was exciting, although humorous, in the telling.

It seemed almost absurd to consider her fish stories seriously. That Mr. Hale and his Indians had waded in to their knees during

the run of salmon in Naha Bay, and had caught the fish simply by shoveling them out of the water by the spoon ends of their paddles, onto the banks, did seem a test to common sense and intelligence. Mrs. Hale's delight was superlative as she watched Eleanor stroll about, examining with interest a gun, or a wonderful pelt, or a string of walrus ivories, all of which covered the wall space.

The time flew and Ackoutan soon appeared with Twostep at the cabin door.

"Now, Mrs. Hale, after we return from the Glacier trip, I shall send the car to fetch you, and you must have luncheon with me on the *Silvermere*."

"Indeed, Miss, that would be too grand. I shall love to go; and I thank you."

Eleanor was now in the saddle.

"Good-by. I have enjoyed every minute." And Twostep started.

Churchill was waiting as she came up. It was nearly six o'clock, and the air, which was like a golden mist, was heavy with the sweet perfumes of the countless wild flowers growing to the very foot of the glaciers.

"Did Mrs. Hale give you her husband's fish stories?"

"Yes," she laughed. "They are truly remarkable, but I enjoy hearing her tell of their life and their experiences with the natives in the pioneer days."

"John Hale is no doubt a star trapper, and has been quite a record breaker. But as the result of civilization is felt, Alaska will become less and less a hunting ground, and mining and agriculture will predominate."

"How will this be accomplished, do you suppose, back in the interior and in the regions of eternal snows? I can understand how it might be on the coast, where the warm Japanese current modifies the climatic conditions."

"No doubt some marvelous electrical discovery will prove the wizard's magic, to convert the glacial beds into smiling valleys of plenty, just as irrigation, for instance, is transforming our desert, arid wastes of alkali plains into fertile farms and wheat fields. I remember seeing in an old geography of my father's the Great American Desert, which condemned to oblivion the unopened wonders of Colorado, Nevada, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Arizona," he mused.

"It seems almost that the physical globe no

longer holds impossible sections," she answered.

"It does not hold any. Even the mystery of the Poles will be revealed shortly. Electricity has been the key to most things, and I feel confident it will solve their problem."

"Then you don't consider dogs and sledges are to prove the successful transportation?" she asked.

"Not if the apices of the earth are open seas, as all the explorers maintain. My curiosity is so aroused that I have decided to try and find out by going, myself, some day."

Something clutched her throat. After a bit she righted, and in a steady, even voice asked:

"Don't you think Twostep has picked up a stone? He seems to be going lame."

Churchill leaned far over in the saddle, looking down; then pulling up, dismounted and made a more thorough examination, but without result. Twostep had not picked up a stone.

As they rode on, he told her of the various tribes and their modes of life and customs, and how that even in Alaska the native was passing, and the day would come when his exist-

ence, like that of the North American Indian, would be but a memory.

"I bought several very interesting objects of native Alaskan Indian work at Dawson," she remarked, "particularly the women's work. Among other things an entire costume, even to the hair ornaments and the moccasins. I drew the line at the *labrette,* or dart for the lip, which father's pilot described. Some day I shall array myself and play Indian."

They were now but a short distance from Skagway.

"Consuelo is making great preparations for the Glacier trip, and claims that the inspiration is due to you entirely. She declares she would not attempt the expedition without you as generalissimo."

"I should be sorry to cause Mrs. Loring any disappointment or inconvenience, but it will be impossible for me to go."

"But you promised," the girl urged. "Surely, that is reason enough for you to go?"

"No. It is not, under the circumstances," he answered bitterly.

Here she turned her head and looking at

him, said in pleading tones, "But if I were to add to hers my earnest *wish* that you should go, then—then——"

"Because *you* ask me is why I *dare* not go," he breathed passionately.

They had stopped their horses and stood for a moment looking into each other's eyes, the blaze of his revealing his secret. Her heart beat so hard at the discovery that she swayed, and her senses seemed reeling.

She started up Twostep and without speaking again they continued to the wharf. Here Hughes was waiting, and came hastily forward and assisted Eleanor to dismount. She was white and very quiet, and Churchill's face was set and drawn as he silently helped her into the waiting launch.

She thanked him softly, and the boat steamed away as he raised his hat.

CHAPTER XVII

In desperate mood, Churchill walked to the hotel, and going into the writing-room, sat down and wrote two notes, one to Mrs. Loring and the other to Mr. Rayner, saying that business of a private nature would prevent his dining and spending the evening on the *Yukon*. He then went out to the boat landing, and was about hailing a boatman to carry the notes to the yacht at once when the launch from that vessel steamed up, and the captain jumped ashore. He came up to Churchill and said, saluting:

"Are you ready, sir?"

"No, Captain. It is impossible for me to go; here are two notes which you will deliver to Mrs. Loring and Mr. Rayner at once."

He turned and went back to the hotel quickly, and telephoned to Antonio that he would not be home until very late. He ordered dinner at one of the little tables in the awninged garden café and sat long over coffee and cigars, thinking hard. Later he went into the writing-room again and wrote a letter to

the great Arctic explorer, Commander Leary, requesting to be enlisted in the engineer corps for the coming expedition, which was soon to sail in the steamer *President* for the North Pole. This done, he hurried to the stables, and getting Haida, mounted and rode off.

It was midnight when he reached The Limit, and the faithful Ackoutan, the silent statue, stood ready to take his horse. The keen, sharp ears of the savage had heard his coming as Haida's hoofs struck the ground far off on the distant trail. Antonio, with equal devotion, stood at the door, alert, expectant.

"I am not going to bed now, Tony. You need not wait. Good-night."

The man withdrew reluctantly, and then Churchill, going out on the over-hanging piazza, threw himself into the hammock, and lay staring with unseeing gaze far over the spectacle of scenic splendor spread out on every side, to some compelling fact beyond. Time passed without his reckoning, but finally a light step roused him and he sat up.

"What is it, Ackoutan?" He had not yet seen him, but he knew the soft footfall of the Indian's moccasined feet.

Looking about for possible others, the brave approached stealthily.

"That's all right, boy. I'm alone," and Churchill, pulling out his pipe and tobacco bag and lighting up, said between puffs: "Well, what's up?"

Ackoutan bent over him and whispered, "You watch! Watch young leddy."

"Watch young lady? What do you mean?" peremptorily.

"Black Buck. He mad white chief. Tak young leddy—heap money. See?"

Churchill narrowed his eyes, and was silent; then after a minute demanded:

"Do you mean Black Buck intends some harm to Miss Rayner?"

"Yes, yes, that so," nodding his head convincingly, and again becoming silent. After waiting for him to continue, Churchill demanded, impatiently, with anxiety in his eyes:

"Well, what else? Go on."

"Black Buck ride, get white squaw horseback some day. White Chief pay heap money get her back. Yes, that so," and again the Indian jerked his head back and forth, giving out a convincing grunt. "Mines too close

Indian village. He no lak it." And the interview seemed over to Ackoutan, as he turned to leave.

"Here, come back. How do you know this?" demanded the man sharply.

"I hear, you bet!"

But had Churchill been the Indian he could not better have assumed the silent indifference of their character. He knew his man in Ackoutan; to appear torpid roused the interest of the native, and better results followed.

That his information so startling, should have fallen somewhat short of the sensation he expected, roused Ackoutan to more dramatic effort.

"You not let young leddy ride alone. Sure. Black Buck watch for that. You bet! Damn!" He felt this would certainly be a fetching blow, and prove a telling shot; and then in a manner as nearly approaching playfulness as the Indian is capable of, he turned and looked at Churchill with what must be graciously considered a smile.

"She be your squaw some day? Soon? Yes?"

"Shut up, damn you! Go!"

A close scrutiny of the face of the native,

as he stalked away, would have revealed an expression resembling a smile of satisfaction that the interview had proved a success.

For another hour the man sat, and in turn paced to and fro, and then from sheer fatigue threw himself in the hammock, and slept heavily until morning.

When Mr. Rayner arrived at the usual hour, Churchill was ready, and together they went the regular rounds of the mines, machinery, and office inspection.

"What's the matter, John? Anything wrong? You look ill." Mr. Rayner paused and looked with keen scrutiny into the face of the other.

With a short, hard laugh, he replied, almost bitterly, "No, I am never ill."

"You are working too hard, then. I shall insist that you take more recreation."

"Thanks. I am all right. Don't worry about me. What have you decided about those placer mines at Fairbanks? Are you going in?"

"Going in? I won't have a chance to. It appears my energetic niece has capitalized the whole thing and owns the controlling blocks of stock already. She has been quietly at work

for two years, the minx! and has named the blamed thing 'The Suffragette,' by Jove!"

Churchill laughed heartily at this, in spite of his gloom, and said, "You will be driven up to the Seward Peninsular. I don't think she has gone that far."

By the luncheon hour, their business was finished and they pulled up at the bungalow, where Antonio had set the luncheon table on the cool, shady porch. Mr. Rayner detected that in their talk there was not the usual confidential sparkle and ring, and that it was an effort to Churchill; he was under some mental strain.

As they rose, the elder man, plunging his hands in his pockets and making two or three hasty turns on the piazza with head bent as though in deep thought, came over to Churchill, who was lighting a cigarette by the rail, and putting his hand in a fatherly way on his shoulder, said:

"If you are in trouble and I can help you, I stand ready."

Churchill wheeled and the two men's hands closed in a warm grasp, as Churchill said feelingly, "Thanks."

At half-past two in the afternoon, Mrs.

Loring decided to take those of her party who cared to go, to Haines, the army post, several miles below Skagway on the Lynn Canal, and ordered the *Yukon* to be got under way.

Eleanor had visited the Fort on several occasions and begged off, especially as she had decided to array herself that afternoon in the Indian costume which she had bought at Dawson.

The chance offered was just the opportunity she longed for, because she dreaded the inspection and criticism of her tantalizing cousin, and the condemning stare of the elders. The entire party decided to avail themselves of Lieutenant Shotwell's invitation to dine at the post and return late by the combined light of the midnight sun's glow and the silver rays of the full moon.

After seeing them well out of sight, the girl went to her cabin and dressed, not even permitting Hannah her usual privilege and part in the robing process. Her eyes and cheeks were aglow with suppressed excitement as she surveyed the completed effect with satisfaction.

It happened that the long, heavy braids of her hair became entangled with the beads and

prickly embroidery, and Hannah was summoned to restore their glossy smoothness.

"Surely, Miss, you do look barbarous in them curious things!" demurred the woman, but as she looked closer, examining the workmanship, she added, "My word, but they're pretty though!"

"Now, Hannah, I am going to make believe I am an Indian Maiden, and am going out in my canoe."

"Not alone, Miss?"

"Yes,—and you are just to wait patiently until I come back."

"But, my dear young lady, some wild creature will murder you!" wailed the faithful woman in tears. "I beg of you, let one of the sailors go with you; don't go alone!" and the pleading voice and eyes were pitiful.

"Yes, alone," decidedly.

"Oh, Miss!" and the maid turned aside to conceal her anxiety.

The girl ran lightly up on deck, and ordered her canoe put overboard.

It certainly was a beauty, she thought, as she stepped in; and taking her seat and paddle, a thrill of excitement and exhilaration surged through her. This was getting close

to nature surely, and with the accessories of scenery and costume the illusion was perfect.

She shoved off, and sped across to the point whence she had seen the Aurora Borealis the night of the "Merry Dancers."

She found the climb more difficult unaided, but she was light and sure of foot, and soon mounted the steep cliff to the rocky seat in the wall where she had sat and watched the meteoric spectacle with Churchill. She here recollected that no other man had ever taken his coat off for her to sit on.

Her spirits rose exultantly as she contemplated the vastness and immensity of these solitudes, and she wanted to shout with joy at the freedom gained; no twentieth century conventionalities here! She had brought a book, and presently, after settling into comfortable relaxation, she read, and the time passed in absorbed interest.

A grating, crunching noise, very soft, brought her back to the material world. Her hand involuntarily rose, and closed over a pretty weapon at her belt. The possibilities of an encounter with the wild animals she had *not* met, had suggested a means of defense. She had practiced with Ken, shooting at a tar-

get and clay pigeons on her place in the Berkshires, and Ken had called her a bully shot, as well as a good fellow. She listened. She did not rise, but sat very alert. A shadow fell, and then a rich deep voice sounding close, asked, "Does the modern Indian maiden read the latest publications? Don't shoot! I am unarmed I swear, and acknowledge the hold-up. Am I above or below the dead-line?"

He wore the garb of the Indian hunter, and standing straight and tall, bare-headed, he looked the part.

She glanced up, but the warmth in his eyes turned her own away, and she answered in an even voice, with smiling lips, but just the slightest quiver of the eyelids:

"We are taught to believe, by those who are supposed to know, that there is no good Indian, but a dead Indian."

"I see my finish," he laughed, as he struck a match on the rock, and holding up a cigarette, asked, "May I?"

His eyes were busy through the smoke clouds, and lost nothing of the beauty of her costume, nor of the loveliness which filled it.

She had robed herself with the detail with which a native woman in all the pride of

youth and comeliness would have decked herself.

Her skirt was of white tanned antelope leather, soft and clinging. It was short to the ankle and slashed deeply; above it she wore a jacket, like a Russian blouse, of yellow buck, with fringed edges ornamented in elks' teeth and embroidered elaborately in many-colored stained quills. It was laced in front with thongs of caribou, each finished with a tassel of elks' teeth that rattled softly. It was held at the waist by a cartridge belt. The leggings were beaded and wrought with metals, which clinked and jingled musically when she walked or moved. She had parted her hair from the brow to the nape of the neck, as the Indian women do, and arranged it in two long braids, in which were twisted strung beads. Across her forehead was a band embroidered in tinted grasses and quills, which bound the massive copper coils, as they rolled back from her temples.

She surprised the intentness of his gaze, and felt in it a censure and criticism at so frivolous a pastime as this dress-up and make-believe, like the children in the nursery with mother's long-tailed gowns.

"Don't think me silly. I couldn't resist the temptation of a dress rehearsal,—actually putting the things on and pretending. I wanted to know how it feels to be an Indian girl, to assume the primeval mental attitude," she exclaimed with charming embarrassment and heightened color.

"There is no extenuating plea; you are discovered, and I exact a bribe for silence," he laughed back.

"Bribery and corruption, alas! even in Alaska. How modern and progressive the territory is, after all!"

"Was that a bluff,"—indicating with a nod of his head in the direction of her cartridge belt,—"with your pistol, as I came up just now, or do you really shoot?"

She smiled frankly, and looking at him, said:

"I never fired a revolver in my life, but Ken is very flattering about my gun-shooting."

"Ken doesn't know anything. I beg pardon; I mean, of course, he is not an expert."

She laughed heartily at this, saying, "Perhaps you will consent to become a judge of my marksmanship? Have you a rifle concealed about you?"

"You don't take me for an arsenal, do you?" he questioned laughing.

"I supposed desperadoes usually went about heavily armed."

And there was need of it he thought. It was in his mind that she had spoken truly. A lonely, hungry man, like himself, he argued, needed a suit of mail as well, to enable him to resist the danger of encounter with so seductive a foe. But he became practical, saying:

"Suppose you take the bull by the horns, and see what you can do with that pretty bauble at your belt there. Is it really a revolver, or a novel device for a scent bottle, or a vanity bag?" The play was in his eyes now.

"It is very deadly, I assure you, which would prove convincing if you were the target, for instance. I am very much more destructive than you are taking for granted."

He began to fear there was a prophecy in the double meaning of her words. His pulse-beats were showing her charm and beauty to be more fatal than bullets.

She unfastened the weapon and handed it to him. It was daintily mounted in ivory and gold, and a revolver of the finest Smith and Wesson make, .32 calibre. Encrusted in the

handle were the jeweled initials E. Z. R. in diamonds, emeralds and rubies.

"Why Z?" he asked.

"Zenobia."

"Of Palmyra? Not satisfied with one empire, your Majesty invades Alaska. But why Zenobia?"

"It is a family name."

He looked the revolver over intently, opening the spring which released the butt from the barrel, all the chambers of which were filled. After a close scrutiny, he snapped the barrel back again into place, and said in a convincing tone as he handed it back to her:

"It can do the business all right."

She waited a moment; then, as he made no effort at instruction, she said with a slightly haughty tilt-back of the head, "Well,—I'm waiting. I thought you were going to teach me how to shoot—*straight.*"

"Did I *say* I was going to teach you how to shoot—*straight?* You are already sufficiently dangerous."

He was leaning back against the rock as he stood, one hand in his jacket pocket, the other taking his cigarette from his mouth. He blew a long column of smoke as he looked straight

before him, then, without turning his head, swung his eyes down into hers. The situation was rather absurd and they laughed.

"I see you are determined to perpetrate some bloodthirsty deed, so for the sake of the victim, we will proceed to make your aim sure and final, and have his agony soon ended."

He took the revolver and with a quick deft motion upward, brought it again with a downward sweep on a level with his eye. His aim and sight were dexterously rapid, and the report followed instantly. It was done with easy grace, and no apparent effort, as he half leaned against the rock.

She rose to her feet, and looked at him with frank, undisguised admiration. Then with a fluttering exclamation, she said:

"It seems so simple. Just as easy as piano playing appears when one is listening to Moritz Rosenthal or Josef Hoffman. Let me see you do it again. Perhaps I can 'catch on,' as Ken would say. But don't act so quickly."

With more deliberation he went through the preliminaries again, without firing. She took the weapon, and to his great surprise, managed it with a steady, capable hand, imitating him closely. She looked divinely belligerent and

warlike, like some superb primeval savage woman on the defensive. The noble proportions of her figure, the curve of throat and shoulder, the lines of her lithe hips and slender waist gave to her a supple, panther-like grace, which the cling of the soft leather accentuated and defined.

It was his turn now to look what he felt, but he did not, and in a careless tone, dared:

"You may possibly learn to shoot,—after sufficient practice." At which they both laughed again, and she returned:

"Well, after that, I feel I shall never become sufficiently proficient to prove fatal. I suppose," she continued, "a knowledge of shooting is like learning, a little is a dangerous thing; but I refuse to stop at a little, and shall be setting up targets all about, and when I am gone, you will discover your fastnesses to be hopelessly bullet-riddled."

"Then, like all other great personages you will leave the indelible traces of your existence."

There was more import in this for him than these words ordinarily would have meant.

"As it is impossible to get any idea of the time of day by its appearance in this country,

I am wondering how I shall know what o'clock it is, or when it will be the dinner hour. Not that I am hungry especially, but poor old Hannah felt I should be devoured by wild beasts, and I left her dissolved in tears. The *Yukon,* with all on board, sailed about three o'clock for the Post, where Lieutenant Shotwell is entertaining the party, including Father and the Benedicts, at dinner. I really must be getting back to the *Silvermere* or Hannah will have heart failure surely."

"How did you come over?" he asked as they started to go down to the water.

"Paddled."

They came down from the little promontory to the level, which was near the spot where Eleanor had landed, and had drawn up her canoe. To her consternation it had disappeared.

With a low cry she ran forward. "My canoe! It is not here."

"Did you tie it?" he asked.

"No."

"The rising tide has carried it off, then."

"We could hoist a flag of distress. They might see it from the *Silvermere,* and send the launch," she suggested.

"Capital! So we might," he laughed, "if we had the flag. Wait here, I shall be back shortly."

He disappeared around the bend of the curving shore where the little peninsula ran back to join the mainland. Here the dense forest met the water's edge, and he struck into its depths. The trail was not visible, until a mile toward the northern shore of the Lynn Canal it again came out onto a little clearing or beach. While he was absent she started a search for the canoe in the jagged gaps and tiny notches of the shore line. It was nowhere to be seen, and after exploring the limitations of her territory she sat down to await Churchill's return. Looking toward the gorge, which flowed into the Canal from the north, she finally saw him emerge from the wood and come out into the open. He continued on, and again the trail disappeared among the trees, and she lost sight of him entirely. It seemed almost an hour that she waited, but she could not tell exactly, as she had no watch with her.

Finally he came. She saw him as he stepped out of the dark of the trees, and in a minute more he was with her.

"We seem quite hopelessly deserted in this forsaken spot. I have an Indian tepee up that gorge, and a canoe or two. But my brave Kenneth, I surmise, has made off with the shipping, for I don't find a thing that floats."

"Then he must have been there since you came across yourself, and has taken your boat."

"Not necessarily, because I didn't come in a boat."

She looked up puzzled, "You didn't come in a boat? An airship, then?" with smiling questioning.

"No, guess again," laughing. "I swam."

She shook her head at him in the hopeless relinquishment of any estimate that might be put upon his resources.

"You don't look moderately wet even, and there is not a suspicion of dampness about you."

"I keep these Indian togs on this shore, and my bathing outfit the other side."

"But that gorge is a glacier outlet, and filled with rapids and whirlpools," she protested.

"Sure, they're what make it worth while. It's thrilling to swim them."

"Don't you consider the excitement somewhat reckless?"

"Possibly," he assented.

"It surprises me that your Indian would permit you to be so rash. He watches over you with a mother's solicitude!"

He threw back his head and laughed heartily at this.

"I taught him the English over-head stroke, and he is now a more enthusiastic swimmer even than I am."

"It appears that I shall have to swim also then, doesn't it?" and as she said this she made a wry face, half laughing, but a secret anxiety stole through her mind. It was getting late, although to make a guess at the time in such persistent daylight was presumptuous.

"What time do you suppose it is?" she asked.

He knew it was eight o'clock, and wondered that no boat had been sent for her.

"Oh, it isn't late," he evaded with cool daring. "There is a chance Kenneth may have returned by this time with my navy, and if we go on to the gorge we may find the fleet riding at anchor. Then I can get you back to the *Silvermere* in less than an hour."

So they started for the trail through the woods. It was rough, and in places so closed in with low thicket and brush that it was necessary to stoop to avoid branches and boughs hanging low. At certain places, the path dropped several feet, and again in others there would be something of a climb. Eleanor scorned assistance, and Churchill marched ahead, bending back the protruding branches. He turned occasionally, to see she was well up in step, for the tread of her moccasins was silent on the soft needles and moss. In places the path came away from its thick downy carpet, and grew sharp to the foot with rough stones and pointed pieces of old wood. The trees grew so closely interlocked that their roofing made for dark dim light with only rare shafts of golden rays piercing through. Presently the dim shadow lightened, and they came out on a rocky clearing, and then another stretch of woods, before they were enclosed by the high rocks which were the granite sides of the gorge,—a natural enclosure, remote and protected, open at one end only, as though through a gateway. Within stood the tepee and a low cabin. As they came into this fastness, he said:

"I am now discovered. This is my retreat and holy of holies. With the exception of Kenneth and Ackoutan, you are the only other visitor."

He drew aside the flap, and disclosed an interior of native Indian design, with a few accessories of latter-day comfort. These included a bear-skin sleeping bag, an Arctic suit of deer-skin, an alcohol cook-stove, guns, revolvers, and a few toilet articles, such as army brushes, a shaving outfit, and a three-sided mirror. Then over in the corner on a rack and hanging shelf were pipes, tobacco, and a pile of cigarette boxes.

Looking toward the smoking outfit, she said laughing:

"I see you have your ammunition—and fuel laid in. So, this is where you hide when you forsake civilization. You remind me of Captain Nemo when he took to the *Nautilus* indefinitely."

As she stood within the canvas walls, her presence seemed to exhale for him a sanctity which would last within their enclosure for all time. It was with an effort that he shook himself free from the sensation and came around to the practical necessities of the moment,

which designated that the hour was at hand for them to start.

They left the tent and presently came out to the bare rock of the cañon's side against which the maddened current lashed and boomed its waters. Its noise was so loud that ordinary talking could not be heard distinctly, and Churchill came to her side, and said:

"I fail to see any evidence of a floating keel anywhere, and as your admirable cousin is a most unreliable individual in the matter of time, we had better not wait for his return, but get busy on our own account. Across the cañon, there are other boats. I shall not be very long in crossing, so try and make yourself comfortable. I shall be back for you as soon as possible."

As he said this he did not look at her, knowing he was asking a very great deal of her courage and bravery, and by the necessity of their situation putting her to a severe test. Her quick mind and ready perception saw the urgent demands put upon both of them. The evening was growing into night though always light. That they had not been sought for was most perplexing. Churchill, she knew now, had determined to swim that angry foaming water,

get a boat and come back for her. He had gone back into the tepee to put on his swimming suit, and as the full conviction of his act of bravery became clear, her soul cried out in protest at so great a risk! As she looked into the seething mass, she wondered that any arm could battle with it victoriously, and doubted his chances. She shuddered and sat down on a rock weak-kneed, and as he emerged from the tent and came toward her, the impulse was almost overpowering to rise and bar his going.

"The current is rather stronger than usual, so that I may not demonstrate any rapid-transit stunt," he said smiling, "but I shall make the round trip in an hour, any way, and shall land the boat off on the other side of the point, in smooth water. You can meet me there."

He saw that her face had paled, but she expressed no fear nor dread of being left alone in that desolate wild spot, at nearly ten o'clock at night. He moved to the edge of the cliff and poised for the dive off into the boiling flood. At that moment she turned and saw him in the peril of the plunge. Instantly it was borne in upon her mind that he must not do this thing, the risk was too great. She rushed involun-

Stop you must not!

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tarily to his side and with outstretched hands, and beseeching eyes, uttered a low, penetrating cry,—"Stop! You must not!" He turned, and as his eyes met hers in long searching interrogation, his heart thumped at the claim he read there.

"You shall not do this. I forbid it!" He dared not believe the fact her look and words unconsciously revealed, yet the discovery of it sent the warm blood to his neck and temples. She was so close that he heard her breath come short and quick; but he stood immovable with arms pinned to his sides.

"You understand, Miss Rayner, that we cannot remain here. It is getting late, and I must get you back to the *Silvermere* as soon as possible." His voice was thick and husky, and his face stern, but the fire in his eyes was not to be concealed. She began to realize the demands of the situation.

"Yes, truly," she uttered in a low voice, avoiding his eyes, as she turned away.

She walked back a space from the edge of the cliff, and stood a moment, then turning saw that he had disappeared. She closed her eyes in sickening fear. She dared not look and watch him in that boiling flood, battling

its demon force, and fighting every inch of his way; and yet to keep her eyes covered and *think*, was maddening. In that moment there came to her the realization that her father's words were now verified.

The Knight had ridden into the lists! The message had come, and was sounding its import into her soul!

She sat down, overwhelmed at the revelation, at its inevitableness, powerless to resist its compelling truth.

Going to the edge of the cliff she looked across the foaming water, searching its surface with her eyes. Presently far across diagonally, near the opposite bank, could be seen the black of his hair, rising, then disappearing in the swirling rapids.

Breathless she watched, and soon saw him emerge by pulling himself up onto the rocks, and climbing their steep sides to the height of their palisade. He did not look back, but dashed on and out of sight. She returned to the rocky seat and sat unconscious of the time until finally his voice hailed her from the distant side of the promontory where the shore was washed by the quiet waters of the Lynn

Canal. She went to him, and as he handed her into the boat, she noticed that he still wore his wet bathing suit.

"I hope you are not tired. I hurried, but that monkey has not yet returned with the navy, and I had to get this tub at an old disbanded camp, a half mile farther down the shore."

She made no reply, sitting very still and white in the stern as he pulled for the *Silvermere*. When they came out from the inlet into the open waterway, they saw that the *Silvermere* was alone, the *Yukon* not having returned yet.

As they neared the landing stage, she asked:

"Do you suppose anything can have happened to Kenneth?"

"No, certainly not. He has gone to Skagway, no doubt, and forgotten all about my boats, which now may be floating well out on the Pacific."

He was making fast, and some of the sailors were running down the stairs, having heard the approach of the boat. Hannah, too, red-eyed and anxious, peered down over the side, saying between sobs:

"Oh, dearie me, Missy, and is it you? The Lord love you, oh! oh! God bless your dear heart. What can have happened you?"

"Yes, Hannah, it is I, and I'm all right, don't fret, there's a dear. Go order Banks to serve hot coffee and something to eat; we're starved," and turning to Churchill as they came on deck, she said: "If you will go into Father's stateroom, his man will get you dry things."

"Thanks, very much, but I shall be getting off right away. I should like to write a note, and leave it for Mr. Wentworth, if I may."

She led the way to the smoking-room where there were desks and writing things.

"You had better change your mind and have something to eat first, before you go."

She was trying very hard to be easy and natural in voice and manner, and succeeding. To their credit it must be admitted that both were acting their parts admirably. He went to the desk, and sat down, with his back to her, saying just before starting to write:

"I am very much obliged, but I—I am compelled to go."

His voice was very firm and quiet; and he did not turn or move again.

When the note was finished he rose, and coming over to the doorway where she stood, he handed it to her, asking if she would see that Wentworth received it as soon as possible.

He stepped out on deck, and she followed. He walked to the landing stairs, and turned, covering her face with his eyes, saying:

"I regret you should have been inconvenienced in this way, and hope you will be none the worse for it. Good-night."

He ran quickly down and jumped into his boat, and was gone.

She turned from the rail, and went aft, sinking into a chair, numb and spent. She wanted to think, to come to some definite decision, but her mind seemed inert, drugged, under the influence of some powerful narcotic. She could not rouse herself to active thought. Her father's words seemed like the ringing of bells in her brain, pealing forth their prophecy in deafening sound.

If only she could bring herself around to a sane, deliberate line of consecutive thinking, she reflected, then all this misty mental condition would clear—if she could just get her mental balance, her mental poise.

No doubt, she was merely hungry and tired.

She would go and get something to eat, and some warm coffee, and then go to bed. Of course, in the morning she would be quite rational, and laugh at this silly nonsense!

So Banks came presently and announced supper. She went down. The table was set for two; and she could not suppress the longing to see Churchill sitting there opposite.

CHAPTER XVIII

DESPITE all custom and prophecy, Eleanor's late supper and coffee did not keep her awake. On the contrary, never had she slept better, and she awakened in the morning a very fresh and radiant Indian maiden.

She found the *Yukon* riding gracefully at anchor. Her father, Kenneth, Mr. Wentworth and the Benedict party were eating breakfast in the main saloon as she entered.

She had, before retiring, instructed Hannah against delivering any weepy sensational story, and felt inwardly secure that the details were quite safe; although it took some skillful management to compel the search party sent out from the *Silvermere* to handle the incident with just the right amount of sportive lightness.

After the meal was finished, and before they had all sauntered off in search of their diversions, Eleanor signaled Wentworth to join her on the promenade deck. Here she gave him Churchill's letter, saying with easy indifference:

"Mr. Churchill seemed anxious that you should have this at once. Of course, I was asleep when you arrived last night? Did you have a good time?"

"Yes," he replied, "splendid; did you?" There was a twinkle of amusement in his eyes as he looked at her.

She returned the look smilingly, but with a half-defiant gaiety, a kind of merry dare, in her own.

"Yes, I enjoyed every moment. We played Indians, Mr. Churchill and I. Have you ever played Indians, Mr. Wentworth?" she asked, in a drawling, satirical tone.

He laughed uproariously.

"Not under the same er—conditions. But it must be exciting!"

"Perhaps you had better avoid the possibility of more excitement by reading your letter, and I shall give you the opportunity of doing so," turning to leave.

"Don't go," he begged. "I want to ask you something afterwards, but I shall read the letter first if you will pardon me."

She walked over to the opposite rail and sat down, while he read. She noticed that his face drew into somber lines, and that his lips were

tightly compressed. As he folded up the paper, and put it back into the envelope, he stood with his eyes on the water, mechanically fumbling it, evidently thinking deeply; then recollecting himself, he walked over to Eleanor saying:

"I shall be going ashore directly, but if you can spare me a few moments first, I shall be very glad."

"Certainly, sit down."

With suppressed excitement in his voice, he asked:

"Have you heard that Cecil Loring is in America?"

She shook her head.

"No, indeed no. Does Consuelo know of it?"

"Certainly not! And I hope she won't. He is at a hospital in San Francisco for appendicitis, not expected to live; and I hope he won't."

"Oh, Mr. Wentworth, you don't mean that," she protested.

"Certainly, I mean it! Why shouldn't I?"

"Oh, but——"

"There is no possible but," he maintained. "Loring is a villain—that is an accepted fact;

I love the woman he dared to marry, but who is no longer his wife. I am satisfied,—or at least,—at times, I'm satisfied (which depends upon her mood), that she loves me, or would love me, if she used her reason, instead of a lot of frayed, worn-out, decrepit old notions, handed down with other superstitious rot from past generations. It amazes me the way people build up unnecessary barriers to happiness! There is no reason on earth, or in Heaven, why we shouldn't marry and be happy. Now then if Cecil Loring is a reason, then I hope it, or he, or both, may be removed!"

He was so vehement that she burst out laughing, and finally he was forced to join her. After they subsided, he resumed:

"I wanted you to know this, but I don't want her to. His people are with him, and have notified her attorneys, who wired me. All they are after is money, of course. Do you think we can keep this from her until this expedition has come to an end, for by that time he will either be dead, or——" and here he made a wry face, "or better, Heaven forbid!"

"You are venomous, aren't you? You mean she might possibly learn of it from letters or newspapers."

"Yes, that's it."

"Well, she will soon be out of that danger. What day has she decided upon, to start for the Glacier?"

"It was settled, yesterday, to start the day after to-morrow; that is, if Churchill will only show up, so that Mrs. Loring can definitely decide. She doesn't want to conflict with his work, and is waiting to arrange her time to suit his."

"Then he is going?" she asked this with consummate indifference.

"Mrs. Loring hopes so." He looked keenly at her profile, but she did not move an eyelash. Mentally he applauded her acting; it was quite a finished piece of bluff; for with Churchill's confidence in his keeping, added to the result of his own observations, he was in a position to appreciate the inevitable consequences of the coming together of two such natures as those of Eleanor and Churchill.

He looked at his watch, saying: "Please excuse me now. I must be going ashore. I am late already."

He left her, hurried down the steps to the landing stage, where the launch was waiting, and was soon at the Skagway wharf, where

Jack was pacing up and down impatiently. He came forward, as Wentworth stepped from the boat, saying sarcastically:

"Sorry you hurried, old man. You're only an hour behind time, by Jove!"

"Oh, forget it. What's the matter?" returned the other.

John led the way to his car, standing under the garage shed. After they were both seated and the machine was well under way beyond the limits of the town, he slowed up, and began:

"I have decided to join Leary going North this month."

Dick turned in surprise,—"Do you mean the Polar Expedition?"

"Sure."

"The deuce!"

Both men sat in silence for several moments, and Dick was the first to speak.

"Humph! I see it all. God! I'm sorry for you. It's as bad as that—then?"

The steel of the gray eyes looking straight ahead, and the square of Churchill's massive shoulders drew on the passing landscape the lines of a figure of indomitable determination and courage.

"Yes, and worse. Something has occurred recently which compels me to think she—oh, well, there is a possibility she may be interested. I,—you see, I must get out of this, at once. I had a wire from Leary yesterday. He has heard of me through Faulkner;—of my work in Cuba and the Philippines. I wrote him two days ago, which, of course, he has not received. I did not know just where to reach him, and addressed my letter to the Arctic Club. But this message of his is dated from Vancouver. shall leave to-night."

"Confound it! To-night?" Dick protested.

Wentworth turned in his seat looking at his friend with furrowed brow and tense face; then added, "How do you go?"

"In this car to the first port on the coast where I can get a boat. I should go straight through by the machine, but the roads are bad in places, and I'll make better time by water."

They rode on in quiet for a space, Dick suggesting:

"The Seattle steamer leaves in two days. Can't you wait for that?"

"It's not the *Spokane,* though; it's a slow boat. No, I must get off to-night."

"And your own ship floating in the Harbor!" They both laughed, and Jack added:

"The situation is like that of some poor devil dying of thirst on the ocean."

"There'll be something doing when they discover you have deserted on the very eve of the Glacier trip. What shall you do about Rayner?"

"He is to be at The Limit for luncheon, and I shall explain to him that private affairs are responsible. After seeing Leary, I shall be back here in about ten days, install Watts, who is a first-class man, perfectly capable of doing this work. Then I shall close out and skidoo, and meet the *President* on the Atlantic coast somewhere on her way north. I'll drive you back now, old man. I'm to meet Mr. Rayner at the bank. Where to, the hotel or the wharf?"

"Oh, any old place," snarled Dick.

"I shall wire you from Juneau on my way back here, to meet me at the hotel, and then you must come out and spend the night with me at The Limit. Now where shall I put you down?"

"At the dock."

They pulled up and as Wentworth jumped

out, they gave a long tight hand-clasp, and firm steady look into each other's eyes. With a "Good luck, old man; so long," they parted.

Churchill went at once to the bank and found Mr. Rayner waiting in the president's room. After a few moments of chat among the three men, Mr. Rayner and Churchill left for the Aurora Borealis.

When the usual work and matters of business had been transacted, Churchill explained that his personal affairs would compel him to be away for ten days. He expressed regret at disappointing Mrs. Loring, who had insisted so kindly that he should be one of the Glacier party, urging Mr. Rayner to make it all right with her. He would be too busy, he explained, to call upon her, as he should have been pleased to do, but would reserve that pleasure for his return, which would be about the time the *Yukon* would be back from the Glacier. He did not mention Commander Leary, nor the Arctic Expedition, reserving that until the final moment. During his absence, Watts would be perfectly able to run things, he explained, assuring Mr. Rayner that in Watts he had a valuable man.

"I certainly hope, John, that you will re-

member what I have said, and if I can be of any possible service, you will call upon me."

"Indeed, sir, believe that I appreciate your kindness most heartily, but in this case I must work out the result alone." There was a ring of finality in his tone which also seemed to dismiss any other possible reference to the matter.

After luncheon, and a smoke, Mr. Rayner rose, saying, "Well, my boy, you have some preparations to make, so I shall be off. Consuelo intends to sail for Seattle two days after returning to Skagway from the Glacier, and Eleanor and I go two days after that. This will give me about four days with you before we start for home. Eleanor and I shall leave the *Silvermere* at Vancouver and return by the Canadian Pacific. When you come East, consider my house your club. So long."

Churchill stood for a moment, watching the receding automobile with something very like moisture in his eyes.

Great was the consternation and amazement on the two yachts when the news became known. Mrs. Loring yielded reluctantly to the frustration of her plan, and was almost tempted to give up altogether the voyage to the Muir Glacier. But to this a noisy opposi-

tion arose, so that, according to the original scheme, the *Yukon* sailed the day following Churchill's departure for Vancouver.

Skagway seemed, quite suddenly, to have become a different city. No launches back and forth, no automobiles rushing through the streets to the docks and out to the mines. Skagway, like Dawson and Nome, boasted many motor cars, but the merry, laughing yachting party was not in those remaining.

The week passed, and again the *Yukon* sailed in to her berth off in the deeper waters, beyond the city.

Churchill returned by a steamer which he had chartered at Vancouver, making the trip in very rapid time. He had seen the great explorer and had signed the contract which now made him one of that band of brave men enlisted for the next expedition in search of the North Pole.

He determined that before going out to the bungalow he would call upon Mrs. Loring, so he went to the hotel, where he met Wentworth, and they dined together, afterwards going to the *Yukon*.

"Ah! You have come at last. It takes something more than an engraved invitation

to secure your presence. A few little things like a wireless and the signal code, for instance, just barely do it," and Archie Gilfillan lounged forward with hand extended, as Churchill and Wentworth came over the side.

"Howdy, old chap, glad to see you," greeted Bertie. "Come, make your peace with the Czarina," and he led the way aft, where all the others of both yachts were seated in wicker chairs and hammocks under the stern awnings. Mrs. Loring gave him a warm welcome.

"You are just in time," she said. "We are all talking at once. Every one is giving his and her own description of the Glacier, which is, of course, the most wonderful and beautiful thing in the world. Your timely coming has averted bloodshed, and spared the lives of some of us."

There was the general greeting all round. Churchill joined the smoking men, and lighting a cigarette he looked down through the flare of the match to find Eleanor regarding him from under half-closed lids as she lay back in the hammock.

Just for a second he lost his head, but Mrs. Loring's voice recalled him.

"I am planning to start South the day after to-morrow, and want you to tell us whether we ought to do any other points on the way down? and if so, what are they? Oh, yes, and if we should go to Sitka, do we strike any open sea? or do we continue in this inside passage? The women are united against sea-sickness; they are so utterly spoiled by all this charming marine life on a land-locked waterway that they are condemning the ocean."

"Well," replied Churchill, "as you people came directly through on your way up the coast, I should advise a few side trips returning. Sitka, of course, is well worth a visit."

"Some one has said, that in approaching it one is reminded of Naples, because the houses are clustered at the base of the mountains, while across the bay Mount Edgecombe resembles Vesuvius, and being an extinct volcano completes the likeness. Do you think so, Mr. Churchill?" Mr. Wickham asked.

"Yes, that's about it. I never thought of it, however, exactly that way before. I am sure you wouldn't regret a day at Sitka, but more than that would be——" and he threw up his hands as Bertie interposed.

"Rubbing it in, eh?"

"Exactly," he laughed, adding: "Then there is the wonderful Treadwell Mine on Douglass Island, for as the guide books put it, 'No trip to Alaska is complete without a visit to this interesting mine.'"

"Hold on there, John, how about the Aurora Borealis?" Mr. Rayner laughingly questioned.

"You must get Mr. Churchill to run a line of Observation Automobiles; 'Seeing the Aurora Borealis cars,' and the innocent tourist will be under the impression he is to see the Northern Lights, somewhere the other side of the Arctic Circle," Mrs. Fraser advised.

"Such tiresome children! If there are any more interruptions I shall send you all off to bed," reprimanded Mrs. Loring. "Let me see, we have arrived at Douglass Island, Mr. Churchill; now then," turning to Wentworth, "will you hand me that writing pad over there. I want to get this route down in systematic form."

"Sure, she does," chuckled her uncle. "Con will die systematically; that's her long suit."

"Uncle Jim, please," coaxingly. "This is my ship, and I am master. You shall be sent

to the guard room, if you don't behave," this with mock austerity.

"This is not your ship," he corrected. "I have your boat, my lady; ha, ha!"

"This ship belongs to a Pacific-Coast bounder, a millionaire jelly-fish, who can, vulgarly speaking, buy and sell all of us. Now will you be good?" And Bertie strutted about the deck, nodding his head in convincing jerks, at each of them in turn; while Wentworth and Churchill, under cover of the general talk and laughter, signaled an eye-flash.

"Sit down, Albert Edward!" urged Archie. "You're making an ass of yourself, for this man John Alexander, who owns this out-fit, is a very decent fellow, I'm told, and lives in Patagonia, or some such place."

"Make it the Straits of Magellan," retorted the other. "You don't know what you're talking about!"

"Will somebody kindly put these lunatics in irons!" and Consuelo assumed a judicial air as, holding her pencil in readiness, she looked at Churchill.

"Proceed——"

"The Treadwell," he responded, "is the largest gold mine in the world; and you must

not fail to look down into the 'glory hole,' which is an enormous pit in the mountain. In it the mine-workers can be seen putting in the shots for the great blasts. This mine has three crushing mills, aggregating 790 stamps, and it is estimated that there is enough ore in sight to be worth five times the sum the United States paid for the entire Territory. Don't miss Juneau, either. It is very picturesque, essentially a mining town, situated on a narrow strip of land flanked by precipitous mountains. Half a mile away, up a trail, is an Auk village, and a few miles back of Juneau, up a gulch, lies the Silver Bow. It is all worth the time and the trouble." Bertie slowly came behind Churchill, and placed the megaphone to his lips.

"Too late, Talbot," laughed Churchill. "I've spoken my little piece. Next. Now tell me what you all thought of the Glacier?"

The exclamations came in tumbled confusion, and the enthusiasm of each speaker ran high in their efforts to express it.

"It's an all-star attraction, and we haven't adjectives enough at our command," ventured Victor Schuyler.

"All I could think of," spoke up Mrs.

Fraser, "was a clear, crystal ice mountain, a mile wide and five hundred feet high, combining all sorts of architectural details, such as cathedral spires, domes, minarets, cupolas, towers, buttresses, and balconies. Supporting these, there were pillars of sapphire, marble pilasters, malachite columns, pinnacles of pure alabaster, in places changed to deep indigo blue. And besides all this, when the sun came out and shone over it, there were diamonds and emeralds and rubies, and all the other cut and uncut jewels set into its façade."

"Somebody has been reading the Century Dictionary," teased her husband.

"As sure as me name is Maggie," came from Kenneth.

"Well, I'm just scenery-sick," groaned Bertie. "It's gone to my head. I've swallowed totem poles, Eskimo dogs, five tribes of Indians, with bead and basket work attachments, twenty-five well developed glaciers, midnight suns and gold mines, for three weeks."

"Now, children," remarked Mrs. Loring, "I want to end our delightful sojourn in this Northland with a little jollification, purely twentieth century, as a kind of relaxation

after all our researches into the primeval history of the geographical, geological and ethnological conditions of this wonderland. Tomorrow night will be our last in these waters, as we sail at five o'clock the following morning; and I want to see you all, *without fail*, or *regrets*," here she indicated Churchill, by a nod, and smiling rebuke of her eyes. "Dinner at eight o'clock, followed by a dance on deck. It will be a personal grievance, if there are any absentees."

As she finished speaking, Bertie jumped on his chair, gesticulating wildly, and shouting: "Three cheers for Mrs. Loring, hip, hip, hurrah!" After the hearty acclamations had diminished somewhat, the party broke into little groups. Churchill and Wentworth pushed their way over to their hostess, who was surrounded and showered with expressions of delight and appreciation from all sides.

Extending her hand to Churchill she said, "I hope you are not going to disappoint me this time, Mr. Churchill."

He realized that any attempt at escape now would be equivalent to an insult to this charming, hospitable woman.

"I certainly hope to be with you, Mrs. Lor-

ing, and Mr. Wentworth consents to go my bond, as he is to return with me now to The Limit for the night. He can keep a sharp lookout that I don't get away again."

They all three laughed, and shaking hands, the two men took their leave.

CHAPTER XIX

When all the final details were completed the *Yukon* appeared from the shore to be a fire ship, all hung and strung with electric stars, softened in their glow by silken shades of every delicate color, draped and festooned low near the deck.

The musicians were seated on the captain's bridge, and every inch of deck space had received its coat of wax. Here and there were little nooks and rest-awhiles, which Kenneth called "flirtation joints," arranged by placing the life-boats on their beam ends, with the keels towards the deck, furnished with rugs and pillows, thus inviting to a delightful seclusion.

The smoking-room extended the hospitalities of a buffet supper, with tables for bridge.

Boughs of Alaska pine were banked in profusion all about, with twinkling incandescents blinking through the foliage, which exhaled from its needles the soft sweet aroma of the forest.

It was nearly eight o'clock as Consuelo

stepped inside the main saloon for a final inspection.

Covers were laid for twenty-two. Her Japs had worked hard to please her, and felt well repaid by her evident and keen delight. She examined minutely each detail, enjoying the novelty exercised in table decoration. Pine needles and little bunchy tufts and clusters of the bough ends were used in decorative fashion, and at each place a miniature Totem pole was the souvenir.

Togo stood respectfully awaiting her notice and verdict. That this would be satisfactory, he could already feel assured by her smile and little suppressed oh's and ah's, breathed in enthusiastic approval.

On deck just at this moment, Bertie, who was master of ceremonies by appointment, was having a bad five minutes.

Ackoutan had just climbed over the side bearing a note, addressed to this major domo.

"Can't be with you for dinner. Sorry, but will come later. J. C."

There was an ominous flood of hissing expletives flying in all directions as this young gentleman dashed down the companionway in

search of the hostess. He found her and thrust the envelope into her hands, groaning.

"Oh, you poor boy," she teased as she read the note, "I didn't know you loved him so."

"Yes, I feel as if I loved him," between clinched teeth; "he's made a lop-sided dinner table, that's what. Who, I should like to know, can I get to take that Stanley girl in to dinner? It is ten minutes of eight, and the launch from the hotel will be here directly. Shall I have her quietly put to death? That is the only way to even things up, for I haven't —another man."

Mrs. Loring turned to Togo:

"Ask Captain Saunders to come here at once," and then to Bertie: "The table looks charming, doesn't it?"

"Yes, very," without looking at it; "but what are you going to do with the Captain?"

"Put him to death too, or what he will consider as the same thing; take him in to dinner, so that *you* can have the Stanley maid," and she patted him on the back with her fan. Then she became busy in changing the cards while poor Bertie was tearing about in silent remonstrance.

The boats were now arriving and Mrs. Loring went up to the music-room, where she was to receive the guests. Eleanor and her father were on deck, and she noticed that in the launch from Skagway, which immediately followed hers, Churchill was not one of the passengers. She concluded he would come in his canoe, and kept her ears trained for the sound of the paddle. While she was chatting with Cornelia Ford and Grace Benedict, she wondered if he could already be aboard, and looking through the music-room door that streamed its shaft of light across the deck, she saw Togo announcing dinner, and Consuelo giving the signal by leading off with Captain Saunders. Clearly, something had changed the programme, for Bertie was to have taken in Consuelo.

Wentworth came for her and they fell in line.

"Whatever is the matter with Bertie? He is making faces at us," Eleanor whispered.

"He has had to substitute, at the last moment, and he's kicking. Churchill couldn't come, you know. Something wrong at Wiggan."

The lights went out for her, the beautiful

dinner-table picture became dull and commonplace, and a sickening clutch caught at her throat.

"But Bertie should consider himself very fortunate," she said, "Kate Stanley is a dear," and the keenest observer could detect no evidence of her disappointment.

Homer Stanley on her other side was asking if she intended sailing the same day as Mrs. Loring?

"No. Father will remain possibly a day or so longer,—until Thursday, I think. Doesn't everything look Alaskarish?" and she found herself talking, during the remainder of the dinner, to no very definite purpose.

Coffee was to be served on deck. The men sat about lazily smoking before the dance. Eleanor was listening intently for sounds from the water. Her dance card was filling; soon there would be nothing left, and *he* had not come!

Almost an hour later, she was dancing with Archie Gilfillan, and as they neared the smoking-room, where her father, Mr. Fraser, Mrs. Schuyler and Mrs. Livingston were playing bridge, she saw Churchill standing in the full glare of the chandelier, talking to Consuelo.

In that instant, while he was flashed before her eyes as she was whirled past the door, she decided that he appeared even taller and handsomer than ever in evening clothes. The dance seemed longer than usual, and when at its conclusion Gilfillan led her to the stern, she sank into a reclining deck-chair under the awning with a sense of grateful release.

When the music resumed for the following dance, Gilfillan rose, asking if he should take her anywhere before he claimed his next partner. But she chose to sit quietly there while she waited for Bertie, whose name followed next on her card.

As she sat facing the water over the stern rail, she did not see or hear Churchill coming down the deck until he stood almost beside her looking down.

"Talbot says it is all over but the shouting, but he is a pessimist. Surely I may hope for *one* dance?"

He picked up her fan which lay upon the chair opposite her, having the dance card attached to it. He looked the programme over, but found no vacancy. At that moment Bertie dashed in view, and coming up, panting, explained to Eleanor that her cousin required

his presence in the smoking-room for bridge, and refused to consider this dance as an obstacle, saying he could get a substitute; perhaps Mr. Churchill would substitute?

So, after all, Mrs. Loring's designing little plot proved his opportunity, and they never suspected! Churchill stood, saying:

"I am taking advantage of a privilege in daring to assume Talbot's place. I don't dance, but perhaps I can guide you through this, to the beat of the music, if you will try it. Will you?"

She rose, and dropping her cloak stood for a moment adjusting her gloves. Churchill gazed in speechless admiration at the revelation.

Eleanor was gowned in amber gauze, embroidered with clusters of silk purple heather and sheaves of wheat wrought in amber beads. The jewels on her neck and arms were topaz and amethysts of crystal clearness, and in her hair were combs of amber and topaz blending their sparkle and color into the glint of its shining coils.

The surpassing loveliness of the ensemble caused him to wonder that so much beauty

should be entrusted to one woman, who bore it, indeed, with such unconscious ease and grace, and straightway seemed to forget it. Even greater in its power to attract was her charm of manner, her spirit, and womanliness, always gracious and well-poised.

Surely the externals of this golden night might draw on anyone's determination to resist its allurements. Sensible to the charm of the music, the soft dim lights, veiled in color, the gently insistent splash of the water as it slapped against the walls of the yacht, Churchill succumbed to their influence and trembled as he led her out.

They started, and soon were waltzing the slow half-time rhythm; in perfect accord they glided together in grace and unison of motion. They seemed to have always danced together.

"Why do you say you don't dance?" she asked. "I thought you were truthful."

"I don't dance, and I am truthful."

"What do you call this, then?" laughing.

"Heaven."

"I'm inclined to think Dr. Parkhurst and Anthony Comstock might wish to argue that point with you," she smilingly rejoined.

"Have you ever danced with either of those worthy gentlemen?" he demanded, looking down into her eyes.

"No," laughing merrily.

"Then they don't know anything about it," he retorted.

The music's dreamy cadences rose and fell alluringly sweet on the soft night air, and with it their slowly gliding steps kept measured time to the half-concealed beat of the waltz, as in a state of delicious reverie they danced on and on in musing enjoyment.

He refused to think. He realized that this was his half-hour, and he determined to drink deep of the rapture. He felt absolved from all responsibility. This delicious opportunity had been thrust upon him, and now with tenacious hold he grasped every second of it.

His life had been one long self-repression and abstemious denial from all the things his nature craved. The perfume of her hair, and the white gleam of her shoulders were close; and holding her with reverence, he claimed the right as his, for one brief moment, and set it apart as sacred.

At last the music ceased, and they found themselves quite alone near one of the tipped-

up boats. It was far astern, away from the music, and from the confused mingling of voices and jollity of the smoking-room.

Eleanor sank into a cushioned corner, strangely silent. Her bubbling merriment and spontaneous humor had deserted her, for once. Churchill towered up, still standing, as he lighted a cigarette, longing, yet not daring, to stretch himself at her feet. Leaning against the rail he took a few long deep breaths, gaining control.

"Mrs. Loring," he said, "is certainly a pioneer in entertainments in this country. She will be making it the thing for your smart set to run up here for an outing. To-night has proved that Alaska makes a very good showing as a playground."

"If you want to keep your solitudes intact and continue to be 'remote,' you must transport the Aurora Borealis to Point Barrow or Grant Land. Father says Con is equal to almost anything. You rather prefer isolation, don't you, Mr. Churchill?"

"Yes," looking down at her through the curling smoke.

"Why?" she asked.

"It is—safe."

"Safe from what, for instance?"

"The world."

There was a look in his eyes which caused her own to drop under his gaze.

"You are like Li Hung Chang. You ask questions, too many questions," he reprimanded.

"But that worthy sage claimed that the asking of questions was the high road to learning and education and to the gaining of information."

"So it is when the questions are answered."

"Then you don't intend to answer my questions?"

"Not all of them, no," laconically.

"That's honest. Then I must gain information in some other manner. Shall you like the invasion of the smart set?" she continued.

"From an artistic or personal standpoint?" he interrogated, smiling back.

"Well, let us begin with the artistic. Make that your 'firstly.'"

"Very well. Firstly," and he paused in mock seriousness, "while the smart set may be very decorative, they will never be appropriate to Alaska. It would seem like trimming sable fur with tinsel, or hanging shiny Christ-

mas-tree ornaments on the Gettysburg Monument!"

"Oh," she remonstrated, laughing. "You make me feel positively tawdry."

But the light in his eyes spoke vehement contradiction. After a moment, she continued:

"You worship Alaska, don't you?"

"No, not more than any of the other masterpieces of the World's map. Alaska is a wonderland, a marvel of scenic surprises for which one must be provided with a ready stock of exclamation points. But it is no more so than the Himalayas or the North Cape or the Andes or the Alps; for any one of those places I experienced the same feeling of reverence. But then, I'm a bit abnormal as to scenery freaks; mountains particularly, and northern latitudes generally. The tropics are not for me.

"Imagine trolley cars and recreation piers and Luna Parks, with their merry-go-rounds, and shoot-the-chutes, and seeing-Cairo shows, and the baby-incubator demonstrations, all strung along through these cañons and royal gorges. But if all this, and more, if the perching of those huge monstrosities called summer hotels along these heights, and the running of

a network of steel rails over these noble features of nature's face, mean for the welfare of Alaska, the sooner it is begun the better. I am prepared to welcome even the inevitable department store 'Specials,' and all the rest of it. There are no longer any 'uttermost parts' —even the Poles must soon yield their secret, and give up the fight."

"But the irony of your words denotes regret at this march of modernity," she criticised.

"The spirit of the plainsman is chafed and harassed to find his boundless prairies being confiscated to agriculture. The aesthetic soul of the artist is tortured by the desecration of the landscape and of the primeval forests; and that the Red-skin in all his atmosphere of color and picturesque barbarity is passing. The student of Americana sheds tears of bitterness that the opportunities to study and make collections of the few remaining specimens are less and less, owing to the scarcity of the real thing. Soon it will be simply a matter of research, like Mexico and Pompeii.

"For having wrested from oblivion a portion of the vanishing epoch, and for having placed it as a monument to eternity,—too much praise and appreciation cannot be given to Reming-

ton and Curtis for their works; one, by the magic of his incomparable brush, and the other in the electrifying words of his book, with its photographs of rare truthfulness to all the phases of Indian life."

"Oh, but you are an enthusiast! I should have thought with your opportunities you would have made a collection yourself."

He looked at her intently, scrutinizingly, for a few moments, and then replied in a level, cool voice:

"Should you?" His own was one of the most rare and valuable private collections.

"I have begun one," she continued, "I have an Indian room at my place and have picked up many beautiful things here. Father says it will take almost a ship's capacity to carry them. But I haven't finished your catechism yet, and now, since we have dissected 'firstly' so minutely, let us proceed to 'secondly.'"

"You remember 'secondly' is wholly of a personal nature," he challenged with a warning glance.

"You can be a merciless surgeon and use the knife in masterly fashion, I'll warrant. But I give you *carte blanche* to cut us of the smart set in pieces."

She threw a glance of defiance up at him, though her lips were pursed in smiling contradiction.

He laughed between the puffs of smoke as he pulled on his cigarette.

"I see," said he, "there are no extenuating circumstances. I am quite a hopeless butcher, but I think it wise to defer the operation until——"

"But there is no until," she teased. "You know we leave the day after to-morrow and my curiosity is aroused. I want to know to-night, —now, just how badly you think of us. And it must be something very shocking, for you have steadfastly refused our invitations, and repulsed all our overtures of friendliness."

He had thrown his arm out over the rail and had flecked the ash from his cigarette as he looked down into the water.

His face looked very pale, she thought, if such bronze as his could be said to pale.

"And I wager you tried to escape to-night, even. Be honest, now, didn't you?" she urged laughing.

He did not trust himself to look at her, as he said quietly:

"If you insist upon my answer, you may regret forcing me to the wall."

There was a latent warning in his tone which sobered her gaiety, and she felt a foreboding of disaster.

"Forgive me, I——"

Slowly their eyes drew together and locked in intensity of gaze. She seemed not to have the power to withdraw her own, so closely did he hold them.

He remained absolutely immovable as he leaned back against the rail, his lips and chin showing his unwavering determination not to speak.

The moment was supreme.

With hearts throbbing tumultuously, they each read the silent language.

From the smoking-room now came the chatter and sounds of laughing farewells, for this merry party was making ready to break up; and Churchill and Eleanor were roused to a realization that good-nights were being said. They moved to join the others, who were now coming out on deck and grouping about the landing stairs.

As he placed her cloak around her, his arms involuntarily lingered about her shoulders.

She could not see the hunger in his eyes because he was behind her. Neither of them spoke, and they stood so for a moment as

though both were reluctant to move and break the spell.

As they turned and began to walk slowly down the deck toward the others, Eleanor could see her father looking at them, with a pleased expression on his face, as though he were glad to see them together. In his heart, Mr. Rayner had placed Eleanor's happiness as the supreme reason for everything he did. He had discovered enough manliness and strength of character in Churchill to have won the admiration of his brain, as well as of something nearer his heart; and it was not strange that of late he had grown to wish that these two might be drawn together, and as he watched, hoped for indications that would confirm this longing.

Even Lord Rosthwaite's personality dwindled in comparison with the force and grit of this out-of-doors fellow. Mr. Rayner had rather secretly wondered that his engineer had stood aloof all these weeks,—did not in the least seek his daughter, even noticeably absenting himself upon all occasions where there had been a possibility of their meeting. And Eleanor, too, had maintained a strange reticence whenever, in conversation, the name of the min-

ing engineer had occurred; so that her father, making note of Churchill's depression and restraint at luncheon recently, surmised that his daughter was in some way responsible.

Therefore, to find them now together approaching him, after a secluded tête-à-tête ever since their dance, when he had seen them gliding past the smoking-room doorway, gave him a sensation of approval and satisfaction.

The boats were leaving, and the parting calls rang out across the water. Mr. Rayner's launch was the last boat to get away, excepting the canoe in which Ackoutan sat waiting for Churchill.

As they came down the stairs together, Mr. Rayner turned to Churchill and said, with his hand on the other's shoulder:

"Good-night, my boy. At last we are alone; to-morrow all this invading army will have departed. I am even sending Kenneth back on the *Yukon*. Come and dine with Eleanor and me to-morrow night. It will be our last chance, you know. Good-night."

CHAPTER XX

Mr. Rayner had decided to spend the entire morning following the ball at the mines, giving the afternoon to affairs financial in Skagway; an interview with the President of the Bank of Alaska; and final instructions to his agents and business employes.

The horses and Hughes were to be shipped that night by freight steamer for Seattle; and by the noontide of the next day, the *Silvermere* would be but a phantom ship on the waters of the Lynn Canal.

Only one day remaining, and then Alaska too would join the number of wraiths and misty, gauze-like shapes crowding the niches of that spectral structure we call memory! The order was given for one more ride, so Eleanor dressed for the saddle, and went ashore. Hughes met her at the landing, with the horses, ready to accompany her. He had, however, other duties to which Mr. Rayner had detailed him, enough to keep him hard at work all day. As the man proceeded to mount, she

reined up, saying, "Did Father give you any directions about the luggage and freight?"

"No, Miss, that is—leastwise, it's all done, Miss," and his eyes roamed afar, unsteadily.

"Hughes?" in reproving tone.

"Yes, Miss."

"Have you completed all the work Mr. Rayner explained he wished you to do to-day?"

"Well, you see, Miss, I can finish it after the ride, Miss."

"I shall not require you to ride with me. I am going alone."

"Surely, Miss, you don't mean that. Mr. Churchill said I was never to allow it!"

"Mr. Churchill?" she repeated in astonishment. "You will receive orders from me, Hughes, not from Mr. Churchill." The icy dignity of tone and manner left no doubt in the man's mind of her contempt of the caution, and of his own conspiracy in it. The face of the jovial Irishman gave no sign of his silent enjoyment of the reprimand, as she rode away.

"Alone, is it?"

She might go alone, but she had said nothing about coming back alone! That was his to command!

She decided to take the northern trail to the Indian village, Black Buck's reservation, eighteen miles from Skagway's limits and twelve miles due east from the Aurora Borealis.

Black Buck and his squaw were hospitality itself. He was most solicitous that she should be well served in her few final purchases, and insistent in his attentions, rather unnecessarily so, she thought. He looked at her more ardently than was consistent with a business transaction.

The afternoon was warm, and she had ridden slowly, but as she began the homeward stretch the discovery that it was past six o'clock caused her something of a mild surprise. Hughes had watched her out of sight, through the main street leading from the wharf, and had then acted quickly. He hurried to the telephone and called up The Aurora. Churchill was at Wiggan, they said; and Wiggan's wires were out of order. Hughes then went to the garage and persuaded the chauffeur to start at once. They sped out and found Churchill, greasy, oily, and black, down at laborer's work, surrounded with tools and coils of wire. The telephone wires had just been mysteriously cut, somewhere along the line.

Hughes jumped out of the car, and as he came running up, said:

"Mr. Churchill, please, sir."

Jack looked up nodding, and then resumed with busy attention, impatient at the interruption. Hughes with anxiety in tone and manner spoke again urgently:

"Can I see you a moment, please, sir?"

"Something important? I am very busy."

"Very important, sir."

That, with the look on the man's face, was convincing.

"Mr. Churchill," he began, "Miss Eleanor has ridden over to Black Buck's alone. She started a bit after four, and I said you had forbidden me to let her ride alone, and she said I was to take no orders from you!" chuckling. "She was what I should call annoyed, sir, being a lady. But in a man, now, I should call it damned mad!"

Churchill's lips and eyes showed his momentary amusement before he anxiously hurled:

"You should have gone, any way. You are an ass, Hughes!"

This must have proved self-evident to the man respectfully silent.

"Tell Ackoutan to bring Haida, and

Amunkta, and loaded revolvers." Churchill rushed into Hansen's cabin and grabbing a knife and whisky flask from the shelf and putting on his spurs and pistol belt, gave a few hurried orders to his men. Turning to Hughes, he added, "You go on to The Limit, and await orders. I will telephone or send."

Ackoutan came out leading the horses, and Churchill went over. While they both were busy saddling them, he explained in the Indian language to Ackoutan the trouble, and the necessity for speed and ready action. It was but a few moments before they were mounted, and off, putting the horses at once into a hard run. John, looking at his watch, saw it was past six, and he knew they could not reach Eleanor before seven o'clock, even allowing that she returned by the shorter route of the eastern trail past The Limit. On, on they dashed. Ackoutan, slim and lithe, rode as only the Indian brave can ride. He sat like a willowy reed, sleek of limb and pliant to the motion of his horse. Churchill was this, with the added technique of the cavalry-man, and with eyes and ears alert they plunged madly ahead, while mile after mile slipped from under their horses' feet.

On, on, without either one saying a word, their faces set and attention strained to the utmost. Suddenly Ackoutan threw up his head, as a deer will when scenting danger, his deep-set eyes burning like live coals while they peered through the distance. A shot! Churchill heard it at the same instant; the horses heard also, seeming to know that upon their efforts depended all, for simultaneously they sprang and leaped ahead, apparently barely touching the ground, Haida just a little ahead, but Amunkta close behind, scenting the peril.

A turn, and the road here entered a dense growth of pines and firs, cutting off the sight beyond. Jack sped onward.

A second shot! And then, just fifty feet beyond the turn, a sight to madden his blood to savagery met his eyes. Eleanor was struggling hard to free herself and Twostep from the iron grip of Black Buck. The savage had one hand on the bridle of Twostep, and the other arm around the girl, in a forcible effort to drag her from the saddle, which she was fighting to resist. There was a momentary gleam of steel as her hand came into the position of aim which she had learned in that first

lesson on the rock of the "Merry Dancers." A flash followed, and as the pony of Black Buck fell, the Indian in rage and frenzy leaped upon the back of Twostep behind her, making a powerful effort to overcome her in the attempt to wrench from her hand the revolver. She pulled the trigger as she threw it from her; and at just that instant Churchill and Ackoutan arrived.

Another shot rang out and still another! The red man slid to the ground without a sound, but Eleanor also reeled and fell just as Twostep plunged forward terrified, and dashed off into the thicket, circling as he did so, clear of her body, which lay only a few feet from that of the Indian.

Churchill sprang from Haida, and bending over Eleanor found her lying inert and lifeless. He looked in dread and horror, fearing the worst! Was she dead? Her face was still and white, otherwise unhurt, but in lifting her he discovered her left arm to be wet and that blood was streaming from a rent in the sleeve of her riding-habit.

"Shot! Christ!"

His face grew ashen. Ackoutan, who had dismounted instantly with Churchill, had re-

Churchill bending over Eleanor found her inert and lifeless

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lieved his feelings somewhat by kicking Black Buck to the side of the trail, and rolling him over into the thicket. Being of the mind, apparently, that if he were not already dead he should be, Ackoutan deemed a few stout, resolute blows smartly administered would hasten matters.

"Here, Ackoutan, my flask. It is in the saddle pocket."

The native disappeared into the dense underbrush, to round up the horses, which had galloped off in fright.

Churchill raised Eleanor's limp body, scanning her face passionately, as though to pierce the closed lids and compel her eyes to open to his. Holding her body close to him, his head bent down until the sweet still lips met his.

Ackoutan came running up, and as he reached them handed the flask to Churchill, who, pouring some of the stimulant out, just touched the cup to her lips.

He then laid her back tenderly, and rose to his feet. Turning away, he took from his pocket a note book, wrote on the leaf and tore it out, handing it to Ackoutan, while talking to him in the native tongue.

The directions were to Antonio, he ex-

plained, ordering that the car was to be sent at once, with pillows and blankets. He was to telephone Mr. Rayner, asking whether Miss Eleanor should be taken to Skagway or to The Limit, which was five miles nearer where they then were. If to The Limit, then to send Dr. Hargrave there with surgical supplies and a nurse at once.

He stood, with face averted. She slowly opened her eyes, and as they gradually steadied, and her senses came back from the shadowy land of unconsciousness, the surroundings became more real. She studied in silence the straight back and jetty hair above her:

"Mr. Churchill, do you know what became of my revolver?"

An electric current of high voltage could not have been more effective.

"My God! Miss Rayner, I thought you were dead!"

"Yes. I thought you thought I was. It seems to me that I have been to a play where Indians, some shooting, and a general mix-up have been going on; followed by silence and darkness, and eventually the returning light through beautiful vistas of trees, as though I

were awakening from a woodland dream. Then I heard running feet, and presently a most disagreeable taste; then alcoholic fumes followed, and I swallowed whisky, which I dislike extremely. But really, Mr. Churchill, my arm seems sprained or something. Will you please help me to stand up?"

"No. You must remain where you are until I can bind up your arm."

"What is the matter with it?"

"Well, it seems bruised, I think. When you fell from your horse you hurt it, and it has bled a little. My 'first aid' will fix it." He took from his saddle-bag a murderous-looking hunting knife, and without further explanation or permission proceeded to cut away her sleeve, until the arm was quite bare to the shoulder.

"Is this a necessary part of the proceeding? Ruining my Fifth-Avenue tailor's masterpiece in this reckless fashion?"

"Quite necessary," was the only response; and then he bent to the surgical work of cleansing the wound, but with sinking heart and set lips. He could plainly see the course that the bullet had taken, and its cruel, gaping, zigzag

gash. That it was still in the flesh somewhere, he felt certain.

"Can you bear a smarting pain while I pour into the wound an antiseptic?"

"Yes. You seem to handle this case with professional skill. Where did you learn surgery, and 'first aid,' and all that?"

"In the Philippines." He vouchsafed no further information.

A blanching of face and lips was the only evidence of the intense pain she must be suffering. He did not speak again until his work was finished, and the arm lay bandaged in the neat way that spoke of the trained hand.

"Very cleverly done, Doctor."

But he made no answer, only turned his back while he put away into the saddle-bag the paraphernalia. She lay very still.

"Please, what is the next move, Mr. Doctor-Man?"

"I am going to carry you a short distance to an abandoned cabin of one of the miners, to await the relief party from the Aurora. I have sent Ackoutan back to fetch them."

"Going to carry me? Thanks. I haven't been shot in the foot, and as I don't require my arm for walking, I shall continue to use my

feet for that purpose." This with a defiant eye-flash.

"Who do you suppose shot me? Do you think you did?" with tantalizing mischief in a side-long glance.

"Will you cease talking, please? It is bad for you. Come, we must be getting out of this."

By this time she had risen with his help, and was standing, rather a weak and wan-looking Diana, but plucky and determined.

"Well, Mr. Generalissimo, your shattered troops are in marching order. Lead on."

"Come along, then. If you insist upon walking, suppose we proceed," and he dextrously kept his body between hers and the ghastly sight in the roadway. The cabin luckily being through a clump of trees in the opposite direction, he was successful in accomplishing this.

She was bravely fighting the sickening faintness which exertion now caused. On she labored, but the steps grew more and more uncertain. Not a word was spoken by either one, and the crunching of the dry pine needles under their feet was the only sound. An unruly dizziness seemed to bring the ground up and

down before her eyes, in great heaving masses, like the waves of a restless sea. She swayed, and was caught in strong arms, and held against him to be borne tenderly to the cabin.

Once she opened her eyes to see that resolute dark face so close to her own, but with eyes straight ahead and lips compressed. It might have been a face of stone or bronze.

In silence he carried her to the shack, which was but a few paces distant. It was a miner's rude hut, but clean and empty, and there he laid her down on the floor, taking off his khaki coat and rolling it into a pillow for her head. Then he went out and gently closed the door.

When outside he thought over the indications, and he felt sure that the bullet was yet in the arm. That meant an operation. Could it have been the bullet from his gun? How long would they be fetching relief? Surely Ackoutan should make it in two hours, allowing for delays. He longed to take a look at that fellow out there in the road, but did not wish to leave her unguarded even for a minute.

She had not asked any questions yet. It was hard to tell just how much she did know;

and after those paralyzing assertions, she was quite wise apparently on all the details.

Two hours to wait! How could he endure the torture of knowing she must lie and suffer so long, and then be jolted over all those miles back to the Aurora. But over and above all this rang out a peal of exultant joy in his heart, that out here alone she was dependent upon him for care and protection!

Presently he ceased his restless walk, and quietly opened the cabin door.

"Mr. Churchill, do you suppose there is any possibility of mice in this cabin?"

With a low amused laugh he came over and stood by her.

"No, I don't think so. Mice don't enjoy starvation; and this cabin has not been lived in for a year or more. How are you feeling?"

"Oh, fairly comfortable. I could sit up, if there were only something to sit on."

"I advise you not to try. You toppled over the last time, so you had better remain where you are."

"Why don't you smoke?" she asked wistfully.

"May I?" with a warm flash in his eyes, drawing out his cigarette case.

"When do you expect the relief party?"

"I calculate they cannot well get here before ten. It is now nearly eight o'clock. The road and trails are bad for a machine."

The long northern day of summer threw its soft light over the land, and the night was but a ruddy twilight of pearl-like radiance. The moon had risen, its beams flooding the floor of the cabin and pouring an avalanche of exquisite silver across their forms. She watched him, and as she did so she began to remember things. A flush burned her cheeks as there came the recollection of his face against hers, and the touch of his lips. Then followed the remembrance of that awful moment when Black Buck grabbed her, and the savagery in the man's eyes glared into and seemed to scorch her own,—his wild ugly face was so near that she felt his hot breath coming in gasps, as he panted! She mentally foresaw that dwelling on this picture would get on her nerves, while on the other hand, according to instructions she was not to talk. Churchill seemed to have gone mute, the cabin was absolutely tomb-like, and she wanted to laugh as she declared to herself that she believed she could actually hear the still quiet and hush of it.

Churchill walked about restlessly, but without sound.

"You remind me of Father when he is planning some startling enterprise. He always plants his hands in his pockets, and walks back and forth like that. I think all men, when in deep thought, resemble caged animals."

She could not help the glance she gave him, and the soft little laugh, contagious in its music. "Are you in deep thought, Mr. Churchill?" and her mocking expression denoted her enjoyment of his discomfiture. But no answer came,—just the flare of a match as he lighted another cigarette.

Quickly he wheeled, and stopped abruptly; then said, with almost unlooked-for harshness:

"This is nonsense; don't you know all this chattering has a tendency to tire and exhaust you unnecessarily?"

"If I don't talk, and you *won't,* I shall at once be convinced that plain boards are hard to lie on."

"What a thoughtless beast I am!" he groaned. "How can I make you more comfortable?"

"It is so beautiful a night I could sit up out

there, on those cushiony soft pine needles, propped against a tree;" and she looked up pleadingly. He bent down and helped her rise to her feet.

She drew a long breath of satisfied release.

"It is good to stand up. I don't like lying flat that way. One feels so helpless. Do you know, when it comes my time to die, I want to go standing up, and like Paul Jones, with my boots on."

He had selected a spot which seemed to promise the possibilities of a comfortable resting-place.

"Can you stand alone a minute, while I pile up those needles?"

He made a thick bed, and spread over them his coat.

"That is very comfortable, thank you," as she settled herself. "I don't want to lie down; just let me sit with my back against this tree, and I shall rest nicely."

"But your arm needs a support," and without waiting he untied his neck scarf and made a sling, by fastening it about her neck. Tenderly he placed her arm within its folds.

She leaned her head back against the tree trunk, closing her eyes, as though enjoying the

comfort of the changed position. He remained standing, and as he looked, realized not alone her unusual beauty, but that she was singularly brave and courageous.

She had uttered no complaint, nor given the least evidence of physical pain and nervous shock, nor of the suffering from the material discomfort of all this.

And yet, surely, the terrible experience of the past few hours would have disturbed many a strong man's self-control.

Without opening her eyes, she asked quietly, "Why don't you sit down? Surely, there is room enough, out of doors here—in Alaska?"

Her tones were latent with suppressed amusement, which her smiling mouth did not disguise. He would like to have leaned down and kissed those enticing lips rapturously. Clearly, there was nothing to be said to this bewitching creature. All he could do was silently writhe under the strain to which he was subjected in her presence. He sat down sufficiently removed, and remained silent, just looking at her with longing in his eyes.

Soon she ventured, half raising her eye-lids:

"How are you pleased now, Doctor, with your patient's behavior?"

He waited a moment, before answering in his low, deep voice:

"What do you consider the proper treatment for unruly, perverse, obstinate——"

"Oh, am I all that?" with demure entreaty in a winning drawl.

He proceeded, apparently ignoring her interruption: "Since you insist on conversation as a diversion, I want to ask you something. You said, the day we rode together, that you felt like putting my caution to the test; that I was an alarmist; is that why——"

"Well, proceed."

"Why you defied me?" Steadily he returned the concentration of her look.

"Why did you ride alone to-day, after you were cautioned not to?"

"I didn't see the necessity of obeying orders."

"Do you see the necessity now? You would make a fine soldier!" His words were a reprimand, but his eyes were not.

"I was very disobedient, I grant you. I was wrong; yes, very wrong." With lips pursed into fascinating penitence: "Surely I am trying to atone, and I hope for forgiveness? Please?"

She was irresistible as she held out her uninjured arm and hand towards him. This was maddening! Torture! Was there no limit to the test put upon a man's endurance?

"Don't!" he cried in agony of tone. "I haven't the right to speak here—under these circumstances, and you must not tempt me! You will be with your father soon, and I shall tell him what it is impossible for me to explain now. For God's sake help me to be strong!"

The terror on her face left it without color, but her voice and words rang fine and clear.

"I shall help you, trust me," then she added in subdued tones, "whatever the meaning of your words may be. I am convinced that my trial is here; and I shall prove to you that I can be brave to go through it, and strong to bear it."

A moment passed and then she drew herself more erect, her voice and whole being compelling in its force and earnestness; she continued:

"But I am no child. Tell me, what is it that Father is to know, and that I cannot?"

"You are ill, you are weak. It would be cowardly to take advantage of these conditions."

"I admit no conditions now. It is too late

for conditions. Speak!" There was command in every line of her body and feature of her face.

"I must make an explanation, then, which will shock your sensibilities, perhaps go further, and offend your sense of conventional good taste and cause you repugnance. I don't know whether a fellow is a greater villain for speaking or not speaking, under the circumstances."

"What are the circumstances?" she demanded with emphasis.

"I love you! I love you!" His low voice was thrilling in intensity,—"without having the right to do so; which is dastardly, of course, and altogether an outrage."

"Why—haven't—you—the right—to do—so?"

"I am not a free man. I have a wife; a wife in name only,—a poor, sick, crazy creature, whom I have seen but once in eight years, and who did not know me then." His face was tense and rigid, and his eyes like fiery steel.

She lay back against the tree, very still, very white, but absolutely tranquil, watching him with searching intentness.

Then he continued:

"From the moment you entered my shack that night I have loved you. When you came before my eyes with the magic of your beauty and sweetness, I knew at once that you were *The Woman,* and that I was a doomed man, and that what I had been fighting against all these years had come to pass,—that of loving without the right to do so."

He ceased and the import of his words sank into her brain and heart, impressing upon her the tragedy of their lives.

Then he went on in a low, steady voice:

"You are what I have dreamed of as I have lain in my hammock smoking; you are she who has sat opposite me as I dined at my lonely table; you are what I have pictured as I have ridden my horse through the desolate trails and wilds of the interior. I have seen your face and form rise like a mirage from the snows and ice of the far north; your image carved on the pure alabaster of the glaciers, which the sun's rays would touch with living fire and transform into a breathing woman, glowing with color and palpitating with life. So accurately has your portrait been portrayed as it has hung in all these galleries of Nature, wherever my eyes have looked, that the color of your hair,

the azure of your eyes, the tints of your skin, your form, your voice, all were recognized in that first glance on the night you came to my bungalow; and I trembled with ecstasy, yet with fear and pain.

"I have known recently," he continued rather more calmly, her quiet giving him ease, so that he spoke with less effort, "that this confession was inevitable. But at first I had hoped to prevent the necessity for it, by purposely and steadfastly absenting myself from your presence. You appreciate that, I hope, and you know, too, that in some inexplicable manner we have met notwithstanding, and that the accident of the meetings which gave me the opportunity of being near you have proved just the compelling force which I was powerless to combat. Latterly, my intelligence would not permit me to suppose you could be wholly unaware of my feelings. I dreaded only the possibility of any discomfort from that knowledge coming to you.

"The day of our ride, the night at the Gorge, and the night of the dance, it was fully demonstrated that some magical power or influence had wrought its spell with us, and that the mysterious attraction called magnetism has

drawn us together. I fought only for your escape, your release. For myself, it was intoxicating rapture to be near you; and I should have welcomed the deluge or annihilation sooner than relinquish a moment of that privilege." He paused an instant, then resumed, "And that is what I shall say to your father.

"I go North immediately to join Leary. The Expedition leaves New York in a few days, and I shall meet it up the coast somewhere. The contract was signed almost two weeks ago at Vancouver, when I became convinced that this—this—was quite beyond my control. I shall not see you again after tonight," his hungry eyes were devouring her face, which looked like marble in the silken blending of sun-glow and moonlight, enveloping them like a curtain of transparent tissue. She was leaning back against the tree trunk, her eyes shining like stars, looking directly at him, her body relaxed in exquisite repose. "The Arctic night is a long one, dreary and cheerless, unless a fellow has—has——"

She leaned forward, her soul unveiled.

"You have it—it was yours without my knowledge, until too late. I can no more help

loving you, than I can help the color of my eyes."

She reached out her hand towards him, in calling gesture, and he sprang to her, but she instantly drew back, saying, "Oh, I forgot for a moment, please forgive me. Although I have not the right to say that I love you, I feel that for two reasons you have the right to know it. One is, that if the knowledge can be a comfort to you during the long Arctic night, surely it should be yours; and the other reason is that I am convinced that we must never meet again."

Her voice, though low, was firm and steady. Her eyes looked with unflinching conviction into his, but her mouth wore a pathetic little smile in her brave effort to assume the courage she did not feel.

They were aroused by the noise of the approaching relief party.

Mr. Rayner, with the doctor and nurse, had made the distance in record time from Skagway to the cross-roads, where the trail from The Limit comes into the Kasaan trail. Here he joined forces with Churchill's men and car, which met them there.

Churchill leaped to his feet, and rushed for-

ward, thankful to see the automobile from Skagway. Soon they had placed Eleanor comfortably in her father's car, and were ready to start.

"John, Dr. Hargrave says the bullet is still in her arm, and the delay in getting her to the *Silvermere* to-night would be unwise. He wants to operate at once; and The Limit seems to meet the requirements for immediate purposes."

"That was my intention from the first. I did not expect to see you here, and Tony was to mention in the telephone message that I would meet you and Dr Hargrave there."

Mr. Rayner rode with Churchill, the doctor and nurse in the car with Eleanor; and the two men discussed in detail the occurrences of the afternoon and its terrible consequences. The return to the bungalow was made in good time.

The X-rays located the bullet, which was removed dexterously; by two o'clock in the morning the surgeon had departed, and the patient had sunk into a normal sleep.

Mr. Rayner and Churchill had spent the hours of waiting and watching together on the piazza which overhung the cañon. John's words which had conveyed to Eleanor the

magic of his love were repeated to her father, with the story of his entire life, and of his marriage.

"I have put up a stiff fight, Mr. Rayner."

"I know it. I have watched the battle, and you have my entire approval and admiration."

"Thanks. I shall go forth now in search of the Pole, equipped to struggle with the conditions of possible destruction. I shall leave in two hours, go by automobile to Juneau, where a fast steamer takes me to Vancouver, then by a special to the Atlantic over the Canadian Pacific. Remain here as long as her condition requires it. Tony has orders. Watts is your man now; have no anxiety, everything will progress under his management."

Churchill stood up. The pause vibrated with an electrical current, that surged between them with irresistible intensity.

He came over to Mr. Rayner's chair, standing quiet for a moment, then said, his voice shaking slightly:

"There seems to be nothing more. I shall want to attend to a few last details, and shall now be off."

Mr. Rayner was on his feet, and taking both John's hands into his own, looked long and

steadily into the compelling eyes, returning his gaze, standing so in silence.

"Good-by. God be with you," and then as the other turned and left the bungalow, he murmured:

"Every inch a man."

CHAPTER XXI

Mrs. Loring was riding down Fifth Avenue one very beautiful, cold, crisp afternoon in December, when she saw, about a block ahead, the broad shoulders and tall, erect form of Richard Wentworth. To her chagrin, the sight of him always sent a burning color to her cheeks. He was walking toward her, for he had spied her car in the throng. Her chauffeur had his orders—by signal from the man on the sidewalk—to stop; which he did, knowing from experience that the reward would be great.

When Wentworth came alongside, he said as he raised his hat, "I'm solid with the police force, and if you hadn't stopped, I should have held up the machine."

"I consider that you take great liberties," the smiling lady within remarked.

"Don't you consider it extremely selfish to appropriate to yourself the entire interior of a seven-passenger car?" remonstrated the lone

pedestrian. "I have been walking much and far and my feet are very tired."

"You should wear common-sense boots," came from behind the dotted veil of bewitching mesh. She had moved over to the other side of the seat. "Where shall I put you down?"

"Nowhere. Let me ride on with you forever! When will you marry me?"

"You are very inquisitive. You asked me that yesterday."

"Yes, and the day before, and the day before that, and I shall ask you every coming day until you consent. Let this farce end, and take off those black clothes, they're only damned nonsense any way. I beg your pardon! They don't mean anything. I'm glad he is dead, and I believe you are, too; we know where he is, now."

"Are you sure?"

"I haven't a doubt of it," and he pointed with his gloved finger downwards. "When will you marry me? Here's a church. Come, let us go in."

"Oh!" from behind the veil.

"Answer me, Consuelo, I insist." He leaned towards her, his masterful eyes seeming like a physical touch.

"Oh, please, Mr. Wentworth," she panted. "After the proper lapse of time," timidly.

"I consider a lapse of time under these circumstances to be highly improper," stormed the gentleman under the high hat. "How much longer must I starve?"

"Tell me something, first. How is Mrs. Churchill?"

"There is but little hope. She is very badly burned internally; inhaled such a quantity of flame."

"Oh," shuddering, "poor thing! And haven't the nurses yet discovered how the fire started?"

"Yes, Mrs. Churchill found a bottle of alcohol, which one of the nurses had put on her dressing-table and then had left the room intending to return at once. Mrs. Churchill threw the entire contents onto the wood-fire burning in her boudoir, and the flame shot out. Her gown caught fire, and then the rug, and you know the rest. Newcomb is to telephone me at the Club, after dinner, just how she is."

"Then you can telephone me."

An hour later, as Wentworth entered his home, his father met him in the entrance hall.

"Richard, a message has just come from Newcomb, saying that Mrs. Churchill died at half-past five this afternoon. He would like to see you this evening in regard to the funeral arrangements. Any news from the North?"

"None."

. . . . . .

The spring was but a month and a half old when the little band of explorers which had made the ship's company of the steamer *President,* and had accomplished the wonderful task of getting "nearest the Pole," according to cable dispatches and the newspapers, returned in their good ship safely down the coast.

On a certain evening, late in April, Eleanor sat reading in the library.

Banks appeared in his usual noiseless fashion.

"A gentleman wishes to see Mr. Rayner."

"Father is not at home. Did he give you a card?"

"No, Miss."

"What is his message?"

But Banks was no longer in the room, and

instead a taller, nobler form, bronzed of feature, came from the doorway and said in a deep, rich voice, that thrilled her to every part of her being:

"My message is one of love."

THE END